

THE BOSTON BOY

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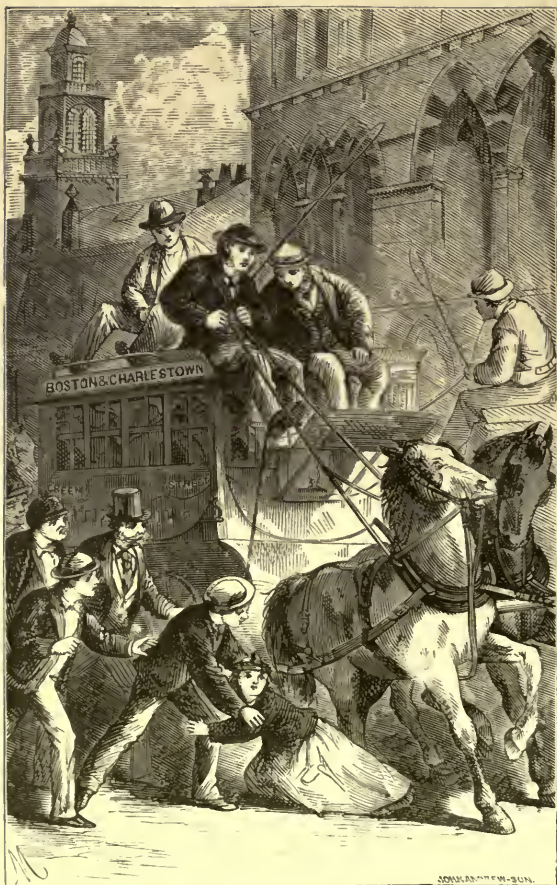
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THE
BOSTON BOY.

BY
LOUIS HENRY.

BOSTON:
GRAVES AND ELLIS.

1872.

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PREFACE.

THE maxim that "Honesty is the best policy," is a true one ; and yet, if followed literally, it is not expressive of the motive which should actuate one in his intercourse with his fellow-creatures ; for there are multitudes who are deterred from the commission of crime, not because of its wickedness, but because public opinion makes it unpopular, dangerous, and disgraceful, if detected.

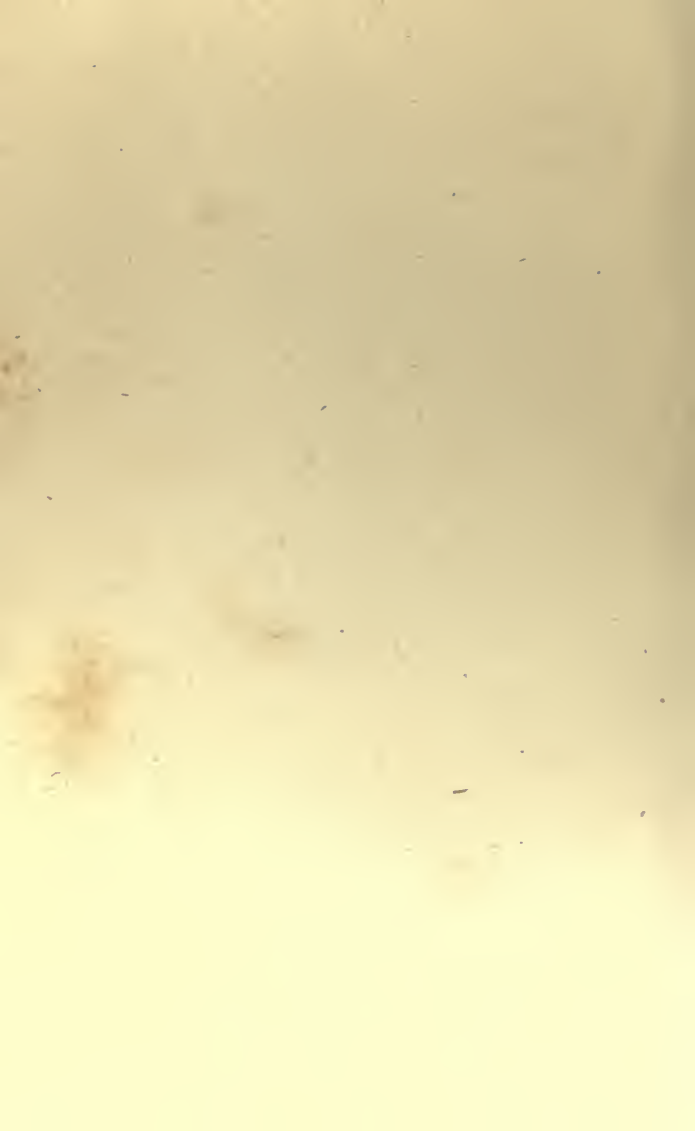
That high moral principle, aided and inspired from above, which teaches that honesty is *right*, and dishonesty is *wrong*, is the only protection in the hour of temptation, and af-

fords the only real consolation under unjust accusation or suspicion.

In introducing to the reader a few of his friends, the Author is hopeful that the truth of the foregoing may be proven ; and with these preliminaries, presents his work to their attention.

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THE BOSTON BOY.



CHAPTER I.

LEAVING HOME.

GEORGE HUTCHINS was the son of a widow. She had been a widow many years, and since her husband's death she had labored earnestly and affectionately to promote the welfare and happiness of him, who seemed to her to be the last remaining tie to bind her to earth,—her only child.

Though she was by no means rich, she was in comfortable circumstances ; and no undertaking was proposed, having for its object the amelioration of suffering in the community ; no charity destined to relieve poverty ; no

project intended to improve the condition of her fellow-beings, but found in her an ardent supporter and an indefatigable laborer. So attentive was she to every call for relief, and so prompt in her response, and so much respected by all who knew her for her many Christian virtues, that she was known as, and called by her neighbors and acquaintances, "Mother Hutchins."

Henry Clement's parents moved in a different circle. His father was a retired merchant, and was now enjoying the respite from care which his long and successful business life warranted. His mother, although almost idolizing her husband and children, occupied a position in society which her long residence in the city had so well prepared her to fill, — the leader of the fashion in the town; and the gay garments and costly jewelry of his sisters, Fanny and Louise, were the admiration and envy of all the young ladies of B——, while the liberality of his parents constantly placed Henry in possession of the newest and most valuable gifts, which his generous disposition

found additional delight in, as affording him means of contributing to the enjoyment of his associates. On Sundays this family usually attended church in the morning; but the more jealous of the community attributed this to a love of display, rather than a disposition to worship God. The afternoon was generally spent in riding, or other recreation.

One of these boys, reared amid scenes of splendor and fashion, the other in the society and under the gentle restraint of a Christian mother's love; one inheriting the belief that the highest aim of life was the pursuit of pleasure, the other, early in life dedicated by a mother's prayers to God, and stimulated by her example, it is not singular that in many respects they were dissimilar, and yet they were firm, fast friends.

They were neighbors; had been school-mates since early childhood, in one of the pleasantest towns of Western Massachusetts, and were almost inseparable companions, but were now, at the age of sixteen, about to be parted for the first time. On a lovely Sun-

day afternoon, early in September, 18—, they might have been seen walking together, engaged in earnest conversation, during which the following dialogue occurred :—

“Come, George, as this is to be your last day at home for a long time, go with me and take a sail on the pond this afternoon. I shall be very lonesome when you’re gone, so let’s spend the rest of the day together, and make the most of it.”

“Henry, I *am* going away to-morrow, and should be happy to oblige you on any other day ; but it is Sunday, and I never did, and never will break the Sabbath while I live. You have known me long enough to believe that I would please you in anything that is right, but my conscience tells me it would be doing wrong ; still we need not be separated, for I am going to Sunday school and to church, and should like to have you go with me. Will you ?” Seeing that he hesitated, George continued, —

“Yes, Henry, please me on this my last day at home by going to church with me ;

it will be a long time before we see each other again."

"Well, George, to please you, I will."

Mrs. Hutchins had a brother living near Boston, a Mr. Wood, and through his influence a situation had been procured for George in a mercantile house in P—— Street, in that city; and the day following the conversation he was, for the first time in his life, to leave home and its attractions, his dear mother and her loving protection, and commence life in the busy metropolis, — a situation of peril to all, of destruction to many. But, unlike many, he had a devoted mother's prayers to support him, and all her kind admonitions to warn him. In addition, he had received faithful instructions in the Sabbath school, and from the pulpit; and it was to God's house he preferred to go, rather than to pass the afternoon in the amusement suggested by his companion. Did those prayers and instructions prove of any advantage to him? We shall see.

The service over, they slowly returned towards home. The hour was rapidly approaching which would separate the companions for months, perhaps forever ; and up to this time no conversation, except of a secular character, had ever been entertained between them. For some distance they journeyed on, each apparently lost in his own reflections, when the silence was broken by George, who, addressing his companion, said, " Henry, I do not feel that I can go away and leave you, without saying something that has been in my heart for a long time—a duty which I have shrunk from until this hour ; but as I may never have another opportunity, I have been praying God to give me strength to speak, and you willingness to hear, and that his blessing may attend whatever of good my feeble lips may utter. Henry, I think I am a Christian ; I have not yet made a public profession of religion, but I have an inward peace which 'passeth all understanding,' and I received it in answer to prayer. I have often prayed for you that you might enjoy this heavenly

peace, and often intended to speak to you on this subject ; but fear of your ridicule and that of others has prevented me till now, when the memory of so many misspent privileges crowds upon me, and in view of a possibility that this might be my last opportunity, I could not keep silent. Henry, I *do* want to see you a Christian ; not altogether such a one as I am, but a true follower of Jesus. Your happiness in this world, will be increased while you have the assurance of an eternity to be spent in praising God for his grace, which is sufficient to cleanse from all sin. Now, will you not promise me that you will give your heart to God ? ”

The sensitive nature of Henry gave way under these gentle words from George’s lips, his eyes filled with tears, and his quivering lip could only reply, “George, I will try.” The two boys then separated, each to his own residence.

On reaching home, and after partaking of their evening meal, Mrs. Hutchins and her son engaged in such conversation as would

be natural in a Christian household under such circumstances. His past life having been spent entirely under her observation, and having been uniformly satisfactory to her, it was not without many misgivings that she had consented to his departure for the metropolis, where new and untried scenes awaited him, and temptations and danger would assail and threaten on every hand. How earnestly did she pray, that God, who had so mercifully shielded him at home, would protect him abroad! and after a long and fervent appeal to Heaven for a blessing on her darling, they separated for the night.

The morning sun rose brightly, and the mother and son sat down to their last meal together for months, and it required all the fortitude at her command to enable Mrs. Hutchins to retain the composure she had schooled herself to exhibit on this occasion, and the failure to preserve which would only be the key-note to a scene of distress at the approaching separation which she would fain spare George, even at the risk of breaking her

own heart. Breakfast over, the hour had now come for the parting. The stage was halting at the village post office, in sight, and would soon call for the young traveller. Clapsed in his mother's arms, George, after returning her embrace, promised to so conduct himself as to merit the confidence and esteem of his employers, and above all, to do his duty towards God and those in whose society he might be placed. "Good by, dear mother," and "God bless you, my son," had been said, the whip cracked, the wheels rolled rapidly, and soon miles separated the affectionate pair.

George fortunately found himself comparatively alone, there being but one other passenger inside ; and he not appearing disposed to be very communicative, George had full liberty to commune with his own thoughts ; and sad as they were, he felt that he could not be interrupted. So, silently he was rapidly driven to the railroad station, whence he took the cars to Boston, reaching there early in the afternoon. He left his trunk at the depot in charge of the baggage-master,

and, greeting his uncle who was waiting for him, in company they were soon on their way to meet his new employers, Messrs. Wilder & Clark. This firm was engaged in quite an extensive business, having a branch house in New York ; the senior partner controlling the Boston establishment, while the junior superintended the business at New York. George had never seen either of these gentlemen ; but the excellent recommendation he had received of him from Mr. Wood so thoroughly satisfied Mr. Wilder, that he was prepared to give the young man a cordial reception ; and granting him the balance of the day to settle in his new boarding-place, he was directed to report on the following morning, at half past seven. Mr. Wood resided a few miles from Boston, — a distance too great to admit of a home for George, — so a boarding-house had been selected as near the store as possible ; and having introduced him there, and seen him located, his uncle left for home.

Mrs. Rice, the lady with whom George is now settled, is a widow, having five children ;

Joseph, of about George's age, and the rest much younger. There were at her house eight boarders, nearly all senior to our young friend, and all engaged as clerks in various mercantile establishments "down town."

After tea, a general introduction took place ; soon after which most of the young men went out for pleasure or business, and George was left in the society of a young man, a very little older than himself, apparently, to whom he had been introduced as his room-mate, and named Robert Ashley. Robert was employed in a dry goods establishment in C—— Street, and had boarded with Mrs. Rice for several months. It does not usually require much time for young persons of their ages to become acquainted, and these boys were no exception to the general rule ; and before bed-time came, they were conversing with as much freedom as if their intimacy had been of years' duration, instead of a few hours. But boys are also students of human nature ; and George was not long in detecting, in the flip-pant way in which his companion alluded to

sacred things, that this was not the sort of room-mate his mother would have selected. But he could not help it ; such was his lot ; and his hope now was that he might be of service to the young man. Here was missionary work for him at the outset. At last bedtime came, and the two ascended the stairs together. Robert hastily commenced to remove his clothing, while George drew from his trunk his Bible, a gift from his mother, and to the astonishment of the former, began to read to himself. He read but a short chapter, amid the jeers of his room-mate, then rose, and, turning to Robert, said, "I always pray before going to bed ; won't you kneel down with me ?" but he received no distinct reply — a sneer was all ; and George knelt alone, asking forgiveness for the sins of the past day, and placing himself and companions under God's protecting care for the night. On rising from his knees, Robert took occasion to say to him, "When you've been in Boston as long as I have, I guess you'll give up praying, to the parsons." George knew

now the character of his companion, and his duty was plain, and he made up his mind to do it ; how well, we shall see in time.

It must not be supposed that this was no cross to George, nor that he was not tempted to omit it "for this once,"—a way in which temptation frequently comes. But George had promised his mother and his mother's God to undertake every duty, and to look to Heaven for assistance to perform it ; and it was fortunate for him that he did not neglect it this first night, for later in their acquaintance he would have found it more difficult to comply. Nor must it be considered that Robert looked upon this innovation as something he was willing to tolerate ; but their intercourse had been of so short duration, that he made no special demonstration of the bitter thoughts he entertained. George little knows the annoyances and temptations to which he will be subjected.

His repose that night was not as sweet as in his own little room at home ; and it was long after he had retired before nature as-

serted her sway, his thoughts were so full of the new scenes before him, of the trying ordeal through which he had just passed, and which he had reason to suppose would come again with increased power ; but the consciousness of duty performed finally conquered, and when he awoke, it was to find the sun shining brightly, and his companion gone. He arose and dressed quickly, knelt for a blessing for the day, joined the circle in the breakfast-room, and hastened to his store, reaching there at seven o'clock,—a half hour earlier than he was ordered to be present, and almost as soon as the porter, who was engaged in sweeping and dusting the counting-room.



CHAPTER II.

ENTERING BUSINESS.



AT half past seven, Mr. Charles Butler, the book-keeper, entered, and taking out the books, commenced a conversation by asking George his name and age, whether he had ever been in a store before, if he understood book-keeping, &c. ; then, handing him a pile of bills and a paper-cutter, and assigning him a position near him at the desk, directed him to file them neatly and squarely. George had enjoyed the advantages of a good common school education, and his penmanship was unusually good for one of his age ; and when the duty was accomplished, the legibility of the writing, and general neatness, elicited praise from Mr. Wilder, who happened to be present ; and even Mr. Butler, extra particular as he was, could find no op-

portunity to express himself in his usual fault-finding style.

Later in the day, Mr. Wilder called George aside, and in a few remarks, said to him, "I have been obliged to discharge from my employ a young man, who had been with us more than a year, and in whom I have placed the utmost confidence. I sent him, as I propose to send you, daily to the bank, and found no cause for suspicion, until, some weeks ago, when rumors of extravagance in his habits, and frequent visits to the theatre, and other places which I knew his salary could not afford, reached me, and I was led to keep a watchful eye over him. My plans to detect him it is unnecessary to expose ; suffice it to say, the terrible conviction that I was being robbed forced itself upon me, with the certainty that he had been pursuing a wrong course for months. I had had the most unlimited belief in his integrity, and felt if I could not trust *him*, whom could I trust ? I determined to make a public example of him ; but his mother's tears, and the almost certainty

that exposure would be his ruin for life, induced me to alter my decision ; and after his confession and a partial restoration, I gave him his discharge, with much good advice, and firmly resolved to dispense with the services of any one in his place ; but as the fall trade is approaching, finding that I must have more assistance, I accidentally alluded to it in the presence of your uncle, and you were mentioned to me ; so on his recommendation. I am going to try you. I have heard a good report of you ; that you are a smart, willing, faithful lad, and what to me is of more consequence, that you are a Christian. I shall trust you ; and I am satisfied you will not disappoint me. You will find a vacancy in my pew at church, and I shall be happy to see you there and at the Sabbath school. Your pay will be four hundred dollars the first year, and if you exert yourself, as I am confident you are capable of doing, I am satisfied you will in time render your services more valuable to me."

George, who had listened respectfully to the

remarks of his employer, replied that he was determined, with divine assistance, to conduct himself in such a way as to merit his patron's esteem ; he said that he trusted his sins had been forgiven, and promised to devote himself diligently to business : at the same time he gratefully accepted the invitation, so generously tendered him, to attend services at the church and Sabbath school.

As time advanced, and the restraint with which a first acquaintance is always surrounded passed off, Robert Ashley made his appearance in his true character, and George was soon satisfied that his company was neither congenial nor productive of good to him ; and all his efforts to win his room-mate's confidence, and furnish him with a good excuse for interposing a word of caution or counsel, proved unavailing. Nearly all Robert's evenings were spent away from his boarding-house, and principally at the theatre, to which he frequently invited George ; and once he came up to bed in a condition of unmistakable inebriation. His companions

were principally the lower classes of actors or theatre frequenters, and his conversation, now frequently interlarded with oaths, had constant reference to the scenes he had witnessed, and the persons participating. To his invitations to visit the play-house, George had always returned an emphatic negative, and at first mildly endeavored to dissuade him from his course, and as a means of amusement, solicited his company to the library room of the Young Men's Christian Association, of which George had just become a member; and he *did* accept his invitation once, but finding its influences too restraining, he left at an early hour, to seek pleasure where he had previously met kindred spirits. Finding entreaty of no avail, and Robert's habits daily growing worse, George could endure it no longer, and requested Mrs. Rice to provide him with another room, where he could have a more quiet and agreeable companion. Her domestic arrangements, however, were of such a nature as to render it impossible to make a change at present, unless

he should choose to occupy a *single* room, which his limited salary would not warrant ; but she promised him that, as soon as she could, she would oblige him.

He had, from his first Sabbath in the city, taken his seat regularly in Mr. Wilder's pew, and became a member of a Bible class. His attention to his religious duties soon became a subject of observation and remark in the church and Sabbath school, although he was very unobtrusive in his piety and modest in his general deportment ; and his employer, Mr. Wilder, observed with delight the readiness with which he transacted the business assigned him, while his example for modesty, devotion to duty, and habitual good temper were so great an improvement on boys they had previously employed, and so marked in comparison with his immediate predecessor, that he very soon became a favorite with all but Mr. Butler, the book-keeper, who from the first had permitted no opportunity to pass without exhibiting his hatred ; a feeling which was aggravated day by day, as he noticed the

attachment felt towards him by all the rest, grow steadily stronger. Still, he could not charge him with a single act of neglect, or the violation of the least important rule of the establishment; and George, conscious of the feeling of dislike entertained towards him, and which the book-keeper took no pains to conceal, only labored the more assiduously to make himself useful, and exerted himself to perform little acts of kindness, in the hope of conciliating good feeling. To give George's impressions of his position, both at home and at the store, it may be well to introduce a short letter he wrote to his mother after he had been in the store a few weeks.

“BOSTON, October 29, 18—.

“MY DEAR MOTHER: I received your kind letter, and hasten to reply. You seem to think that I have too little to say about my business affairs and boarding-house companions. If I have been silent on this subject, it is not for want of any interest in either; but that you may not think my silence is

caused by a desire to keep anything from you, I will give you a full account of everything on the subject that you should know, or that I think may interest you, begging you never to think for a moment that I would have a secret from her I love best on earth. First, then, I am still boarding with Mrs. Rice, and still have Robert Ashley for a room-mate. I fear he is a bad boy; my heart is often pained by his profanity and light remarks on religious subjects. I have talked to him, and he receives all I say with a sneer or open ridicule; all I can do now, is to pray for him, and that I do daily: O, how I should rejoice if I could see him a Christian! So open is he in his opposition to religion in general, and to my efforts to be consistent in particular, that after bearing it as long as I could, I was obliged to request Mrs. Rice for a change of room; but her house is so full, that she cannot make a change at present. I shall not relax my efforts for his good, but it does seem as if it would be

almost a miracle if he should become a praying young man.

“My relations at the store are of the pleasantest nature, with one exception ; although I try to do my best, I cannot please Mr. Butler, the book-keeper. Mr. Wilder, and all the rest, are agreeable, and by their manner I can see that I give *them* satisfaction ; but let me do what I will, I have to this moment failed to hear one kind word from Mr. Butler, and he finds fault with my best endeavors. Why, I cannot tell ; but from the first, he seemed to take a dislike to me. I shall continue to do right, but it is hard to work when people seem determined to be displeased with everything. Uncle has been in to see me several times, but I have never mentioned this to him or anybody else ; nor should I trouble *you* now, but for my determination to keep nothing from my dear mother.

“Now, mother, I have something to say to you, and a favor to ask. One of our boarders attends a Business College, and tells me he has not only improved his handwriting, but

is learning book-keeping, in which he is very much interested. I should like to go, but it is expensive, and I do not feel as if I could afford it on my present pay. I send you a circular stating terms. Now, if you approve of my plan, and are willing to allow me enough to pay one half my tuition, I can make out the balance. I would not ask you to do this if it were for amusement alone ; but I think I shall improve sufficiently to make myself more valuable at the store, and perhaps by and by my salary will be increased. Hoping you will think favorably of my plan, and with much love,

“I am your affectionate son,

“GEORGE.”

Not many days after the receipt of this letter his mother replied to him, offering him what advice, sympathy, and encouragement she conceived the necessities of the case demanded. But after all, she was glad to know his trials were of so trifling a character ; for in her anxiety for his welfare, and suspicions

that something was wrong, her imagination had pictured a thousand troubles, all of a much more serious nature than the facts had warranted. She concluded her letter by heartily indorsing his proposition to attend the school, and enclosed him a sum sufficiently large to meet the expenses, and he lost no time in securing admission to the college, where he was to be found every evening that there was no religious meeting to attend.

Our young friend had been about three months in the store, when an opportunity presented itself, to Mr. Butler's delight, for that *gentleman* to open his heart in a manner never heretofore presented. The bank account had been made up, and at 12 M. (the usual hour for the transaction of that business) George was despatched to make the regular deposit, to draw a check for one thousand dollars for payment of small bills at the store, and to leave an order at an Express office in Court Square, receiving the stereotype direction from Mr. Butler, "Don't be gone all day," — a charge as regularly imposed as neces-

sity for his absence was demanded. On this occasion George proceeded rapidly, as usual, and after attending to his bank business, saw the receiving teller record the amount of the deposit on his book ; he then went to the paying teller, received his thousand dollars in small bills, and putting them into a pocket-book, carried for the purpose, placed the book in his pocket, and hurried up State Street, towards the Express office. As he was about to cross Court Street, a large number of persons were waiting for teams to pass, in order to afford them an opportunity to gain the opposite side, when, just as a heavy omnibus, filled with passengers, was passing, a young girl, in attempting to run across the street, was knocked down by one of the horses. George, reckless of the danger, sprang to her relief, and succeeded in drawing her from under the horses' feet as the wheel was about to crush her, while a bystander caught her and conveyed her to a place of safety. But the heroic act caused George a serious misfortune, for a part of the harness caught

his clothing ; he was thrown down, striking heavily on his head and right arm, and barely escaping with his life, for the horses were checked just soon enough to prevent the wheel passing over his body. The accident, and the noble act which led to it, had been seen by several. George was taken to an apothecary store near by, by friendly assistance, and a physician called. He found no bones broken, although the patient was severely bruised. As soon as he recovered his consciousness sufficiently to give his name and residence, he was at once carried home in a carriage, accompanied by a police officer and the physician. He was taken to his room, and a more thorough examination of his injuries made, resulting in the doctor's expressing the belief that George would be able to be out in a very few days.

After the departure of the physician, George's pain being somewhat relieved, he remembered the errand on which he had been sent, and particularly that he still had possession of the bank book and pocket-book

containing the money. So, looking around the room, which was full of sympathizing friends,—for it was about the regular dinner hour, and all the boarders had been in to condole with him,—he remarked that he wished he could send down word by some one to his employer that it was an accident that prevented his returning promptly, and also that the money was safe in his possession, and desiring that some one might be sent from the store to receive the funds, not wishing to risk them out of his hands until they were safely restored to the owner. Robert, who was standing by his bedside, volunteered to do the errand, and having eaten his dinner, started for his own store, promising to call in at George's employers' on his way, relate the circumstances, and return the bank book. "You won't forget it, will you, Robert? for it is very important," said George, dreading even under this affliction the anger of Mr. Butler. "No! I'll attend to it right off," said Robert, and at once left the house.



CHAPTER III.

AN ACCIDENT AND A MYSTERY.



SHORT time after George had started from the store to transact the business intrusted to him, Mr. Wilder, having an important communication to send away, inquired of Mr. Butler where George was. He replied, "I sent him to the bank and express office, but he's been gone long enough to go there twice. I *do* think he's the laziest boy I ever saw."

"I have never discovered laziness to be one of his attributes," said Mr. Wilder. "He has always appeared to me to be a remarkably sprightly boy ; but this is not the first time I have heard you find fault with him. Have you any other cause for complaint ? for if that

is his only failing, we have great reason for joy, as from what I have seen of him, I am sure he will correct it. He is evidently endeavoring to give satisfaction, and I would suggest that you give him a gentle hint to be more expeditious when sent away from the store."

"I have spoken to him of this matter repeatedly, Mr. Wilder, but it does not seem to have any effect; and now we are speaking of it, I feel that it is my duty to say that I do not altogether admire the boy's appearance. I think he is two-faced, and if not a rogue at heart, I am very much mistaken."

"Two-faced? roguish? What do you mean? You surprise me, Mr. Butler. I do not remember having ever met a boy who bore on his countenance marks of more ingenuousness. I have been very watchful over him, and deeply interested in his success, and it will be a terrible blow to me if compelled to believe in his duplicity. What evidence do you think you possess of his artfulness?"

"None, positively; but my general impression of him has been bad from the first time

I saw him, and soon my suspicions were aroused ; and I also have been watching him for some time, out of the store as well as in. I have hesitated to allude to it before, knowing him to be so great a favorite with you, but my sense of duty could forbear no longer. I have frequently met him in the street as late as half past ten at night, and it seems to me that a boy of his age should be at home at that hour."

"There may be an excellent reason for his being in the street, for the sexton of our church is not more constant in his attendance on evening meetings than George has been ever since he came to the city."

"What evenings do you hold your meetings, sir?"

"Tuesday and Friday."

"Well, sir, it happens that I am in the habit of calling on a particular friend regularly on Monday and Thursday evenings, and it has been on those particular nights that I have seen George as I was returning home. Once when I spoke to him about being gone

too long on an errand, he told me that he was a stranger in the city, and not knowing the shortest distance to places, it took him longer. Perhaps he goes out nights to learn these short cuts," ironically added Mr. Butler. Seeing Mr. Wilder still look incredulous, he added, "I shall, with your consent, take thorough steps to ascertain the truth or falsity of my impressions, and think ere long you even will acknowledge that I can read character correctly."

"I shall certainly consent to any proper steps being taken to advance my interests, even at the expense of my proving a dupe in this matter," replied Mr. Wilder. "But I shall continue to cherish the hope that you are mistaken. I feel obliged to you for your interest in my business, and assure you I shall not prize your devotion less if your fears prove to be groundless; but it is indeed strange that he is so long away. You will please detain him on his return, as I wish to send him away before he goes to dinner."

Mr. Wilder had hardly seated himself in

his private office, when Mr. Thomas, a prominent member of the church with which Mr. Wilder was connected, and who was the teacher of the Bible class to which George belonged, dropped in, and inquired for the latter. Finding he was expected every moment, Mr. Thomas joined Mr. Wilder in his room to wait for the young man.

Time passed on, and it was almost two o'clock, and George had not returned. Where can he be? Even Mr. Wilder began to be alarmed, while Mr. Butler's countenance told the lie to his words when he remarked, "I'm afraid something has happened to him." Mr. Thomas having exhausted all the time at his disposal, started to go, when Mr. Wilder asked him if he would like to leave a message for George, as he must have stopped to go to dinner before returning to the store. In this way he tried to account for the mysterious absence, though really it afforded but little consolation to his anxiety.

"No, Mr. Wilder, I will leave no message; but as we are both deeply interested in the

lad, I will tell you my business with him. I have seen George several times lately in company with a young man by the name of Robert Ashley,—as I have ascertained,—who does not bear a good reputation, and I desired to see him, to remonstrate kindly, for he cannot know the true character of the boy or he would not associate with him. I have high hopes of George, and shall feel very sad to be obliged to think he knowingly places himself under such influences. As you will probably see him before I do, on the whole I *will* trouble you to convey the message, for his welfare is as near your heart as my own.” Mr. Wilder promised, and the friends separated.

Restless, nervous, and considerably excited, Mr. Wilder paced the floor, anxiously awaiting the return of Mr. Butler, whom he had previously sent to the bank to inquire if George had been heard from. He came in at last, reporting that he had heard from him ; that he had made the deposit at the bank at about twelve ; it had been entered on the book and returned to him ; that he had drawn the

thousand dollars in small bills, and left the bank ; but here he lost all trace of him, for on going to the express office to see if that business had been attended to, he found that no person had been there to represent them that day, no order had been left. "What *can* be the matter?" inquired Mr. Wilder, more in a soliloquizing way than with any hope of an answer throwing light on the mystery.

"Gone in the footsteps of the other boy, I guess," Mr. Butler could not refrain from replying, in that malevolent way so peculiar to him.

"Mr. Butler," said Mr. Wilder, quickly and in a sharp tone, very unusual to him, "you will oblige me, if not by suspending judgment, by refraining from expressing such opinions in my presence, without additional proof. I acknowledge the whole affair has an obscure and perplexing look about it, but I am not yet prepared to hear George implicated in any dishonorable transaction." And yet, though he could not account for it on any other hypothesis, he could not bear to know any one else had sus-

picious of George. Then turning to his book-keeper, he remarked. "When I left home this morning Mrs. Wilder was quite ill. I must go home to see her, but shall return here very soon. We shall, I hope, know more by and by." This last he said in as careless a tone as he could assume, and hastened home with a heavy heart, hoping that ere his return George would have returned from dinner, and account satisfactorily for his absence. Had it been any one else, he would have commenced some legal course; but a certain indescribable something told him that George was still correct. He might have lost his money, but his character, never.

Mrs. Wilder was better; but her husband sat down to his dinner with a very heavy heart, and, engrossed in his own thoughts, made no conversation, and listened to but little of that of others.

"Papa," said little Ella Wilder, "Mary Barrett came near being killed this morning; she was knocked down, and an omnibus was just running over her, when a real

good boy caught her, but the boy was badly hurt."

"Ah!" said her father, hardly hearing her, and apparently paying no attention to what she said, for he had too much on his own mind then to sympathize with any one else.

"Yes," said Mrs. Wilder, "she did, indeed, have a very narrow escape, and Mr. Barrett is now away endeavoring to ascertain who and what her benefactor is. The lad was taken care of by the police, and it is of them he is now making inquiries. I really hope he may be successful; illustrations of such magnanimity are too rare to be passed over in silence, and how grateful we should feel to her preserver if it had been our little Ella!"

"Yes, indeed," said Mr. Wilder, but in an abstracted way, that indicated that his mind was elsewhere. Mrs. Wilder observed it, but presuming it to be something relating to his business, in which she had no special interest, particularly as she did not detect sorrow in his manner, simply thoughtfulness, no inquiry was made into the cause. Ella

missed her regular after-dinner romp with her father, for he at once returned to his store in as great haste as he had left it.

"Any news from George?" inquired he of Mr. Butler, as soon as he entered the counting-room.

"None, sir," was the reply.

"Do you know exactly where he lives?"

"No, sir. I know it is on F Street, but just where, I do not know."

"I also know it is on F Street, and he once told me, in answer to my inquiry, the number of the house and name of the lady with whom he boards, but both have slipped my mind now."

He had two important letters to write, and then he was determined to do something,—either advertise, or consult some police authority, much as his feelings remonstrated. It was now towards the close of the afternoon, and Mr. Wilder was preparing to go somewhere to do something, for he had no fixed plan of operation, when a boy entered, saying, in a bold, rather impertinent way,—

"Here's your bank book ; George Hutchins sent it to you. He won't be here to-day, and perhaps for many more."

"Where is he, and what has happened to him?" inquired Mr. Wilder.

"Well, he got run over, I believe ; but I don't know much about it, who's to blame, nor nothin' else. He's laid up in bed now. He told me to bring it when I come from dinner, but I forgot all about it till I felt the book in my pocket."

"Did he say anything about money?"

"No,—or, yes, I believe he did say something ; he didn't give me any, though. I believe he did say he wanted you, or some of you, to come up."

"Where does he live?"

"Where I do, up to Miss Rice's, No. 27 F Street. He's a chum of mine."

"Then you know him well?"

"I'll bet I do ; we room together."

"May I ask your name?"

"My name is Robert Ashley."

"I regret that you did not inform me of

this before, as it seems you were requested to ; it would have relieved my mind very much."

"Well, I should ; but I come down from dinner with a couple of fellows, and we stopped for a smoke ; and when I got down to my store, it was time to go in, and I soon forgot all about it. I didn't think it of much account, or I should have come *any how*."

"Well," said Mr. Wilder, "I am obliged to you for bringing me the news. I shall call on George at once."

Robert left the store as abruptly as he had entered, and Mr. Wilder was again lost in meditation ; but he seemed to come to a favorable conclusion, for he arose, and telling Mr. Butler he should visit George, prepared to carry out his intention, when the book-keeper volunteered the query,—

"Well, sir, what do you think of George now, with this boy for a companion ? Could any good be expected from him ?"

"I must confess, Mr. Butler, the whole matter has a very sad appearance ; but we will suspend opinion until I have visited him

at his boarding-house, when we shall be better prepared to judge without prejudice."

With mingled emotions of sympathy, distrust, and grief, Mr. Wilder decided to visit George at his room, and ascertain, if possible, how much of truth there was in the suspicions of Mr. Butler and the reports of Mr. Thomas; and it must be confessed that, deaf as he would have been yesterday to any charge made against his protégé, the accumulation of circumstantial evidence presented to his senses to-day almost staggered his confidence. The matter of the money was as yet unexplained, and, taken all in all, the case presented to him a very dark aspect. His heart still persisted in telling him that all might yet be explained to his satisfaction; and yet the more he tried to solve the problem how, the more mystified he became, and by the time he found himself at the front door of Mrs. Rice's residence, with his hand on the bell knob, he felt almost as sceptical as even Mr. Butler could have desired.



CHAPTER IV.

THE MYSTERY PARTIALLY SOLVED.



WOULD like to see George Hutchins, if agreeable. You may tell him that Mr. Wilder is here."

The servant soon returned, to show the way to the sick chamber. There lay George, pale and weak from loss of blood and the severe shock he had received, and at his bedside Mr. Wilder saw, with surprise, his neighbor, Mr. Barrett, who, before Mr. Wilder had an opportunity to inquire into George's condition, at once broke out into an excited eulogy of our young friend, which, creditable as it was to his heart, and doing justice to the noble boy who had risked his life to save that of a fellow-being, was not partic-

ularly productive of benefit to the weak nerves of the patient sufferer before them.

“O, Mr. Wilder, you don’t know how happy I am! I have just found him! He saved Mary’s life this morning, and see what he is enduring in consequence! But he shan’t lose any thing by it; and how strange that he should be in your store! I didn’t know it till this minute. Why, he’s a jewel for any man to have.” Then, to the boy, “God bless you, my son! I’ll take care of you;” and the affectionate father wept aloud at the thought of the risk his darling daughter had encountered in the morning, and which would probably have proved fatal but for the heroism of George.

The moment’s pause which the depth of his emotions compelled Mr. Barrett to take, afforded Mr. Wilder an opportunity to devote his attention to his clerk, who looked up with a faint smile, and the remark, “It is very kind in you to come and see me, Mr. Wilder. I hope I shall not be obliged to be absent from the store many days. I think

I must have been very careless, or it would not have happened. You will find —”

“No, you wasn’t in the least careless. I have seen people who witnessed the whole affair,” interrupted Mr. Barrett, who, instead of becoming cooler, seemed more ardent in his praises, and so extremely voluble that Mr. Wilder found it almost impossible to ascertain the extent of the injuries George had sustained, much less prosecute the series of inquiries with which his mind was filled, and with which he had hoped to clear away the mist which hung so heavily around the unfortunate lad. At last, finding it probable that no opportunity would offer itself for a talk with George, Mr. Wilder was forced to make a sign to Mr. Barrett for a moment’s truce, to enable him to hear something George evidently had to say to him, and which he had made several unsuccessful efforts to do.

“Well, George, you was commencing to say something.”

“Yes, sir,” said George, feebly; “you will find in my trunk the pocket-book and all the money. I got Mrs. Rice to put it in there

for safety ; here is the key," motioning towards his pillow, under which he had caused it to be securely placed. Mr. Wilder took it from its place of concealment, opened the trunk, and found his money. He didn't stop to count it, not he ; a boy who had been so careful of his trust would lose an arm rather than defraud him of a cent. But he did not allude to his feeling on this subject ; he would have been ashamed to let George know that he had even suspected him of dishonesty. He returned to the bedside to inquire more particularly into the accident, and finally managed to obtain a pretty thorough idea of it, and the praiseworthy conduct of his clerk in it ; the main features from George, the coloring and commendation from Mr. Barrett.

Now that the matter of the safety of the funds was settled in Mr. Wilder's mind, he was very anxious for a private interview with George on the other subjects which weighed so heavily on his mind, and which he might have had but for Mr. Barrett's presence, as George was in no pain, but simply suffering

from nervous excitement, which Mr. Barrett's manner aggravated, if it did not induce. So he concluded to leave him, and seek an interview with Mrs. Rice, and in a casual conversation, perhaps elicit some information from that source. So after tendering any assistance that might be required (a proffer which Mr. Barrett instantly vetoed as an infringement on his rights), he affectionately clasped George's hand, promising to call on the morrow, and descended to the parlor, where he was soon joined by the landlady. "Mrs. Rice, the lad who was so unfortunate as to meet with the accident to-day, is employed in my store. I wish him to have everything possible to render him comfortable, and shall expect you to see his wants supplied, looking to me for remuneration."

"I shall certainly attend personally to our young friend, Mr. Wilder, and assure you he shall want for nothing to make him comfortable. You cannot imagine how terribly it made us all feel when he was brought home this noon, he is so good,—a general favorite

in the house. Why, sir, there is not a soul in the house but loves him as a brother, while he seems almost as dear to me as a son. He is the best boy I ever saw ; and although I don't know much about church folks, if there's a Christian on earth, I believe that boy's one. He is never out of the house nights with other boys, and until lately he was never out except his meeting nights ; but now he goes to school, he has to be out other nights, but he goes just such a time, and comes home at precisely half past ten, as regular as the clock. I have had it in my mind to speak to him, for I think he is working too hard for a boy of his age ; he don't appear very strong." It is difficult to determine when the enthusiastic lady would have concluded her laudatory remarks, had not Mr. Wilder interrupted her, by asking, " Does he go to a school ? "

" Yes, sir, he does ; I forget where, but he writes beautifully in his book. I'll go up and get his book and let you see it."

" O, no ; I won't trouble you."

" O, but I want you to see it ; his writing

is a pattern of neatness ; and although he is no relation, I can't help feeling proud of him. O, how I wish my Joseph and Robert Ashley would take the same turn, it would take a load off my mind ;" saying which, she swept out of the room, returning quickly with a Ledger and Journal from a well known Commercial College, and Mr. Wilder, on examination, did not wonder at her ardor, for they were really patterns of neatness and good penmanship.

" By the way, Mrs. Rice, I heard you mention a Robert Ashley ; he boards with you, I believe. Is he not the boy who brought me the intelligence of the accident, and returned my bank book ? "

" Yes, sir, he is ; and I am afraid he is not what he ought to be. He has been in my house for several months, and but for his mother, now dead, but who used to be a dear friend, and a promise I made his father (who is a sea captain, and on his way home from China) to take care of Robert until his return, I have often felt like telling him I couldn't

have him longer in my house. When Mr. Wood came to me to secure board for George, I said I could not take him ; but hearing so good an account of him, I thought I would try, provided he would room with Robert ; and the good recommendation George had, has proved more than true, and I thought then, and have had no reason to change my impression, that Robert might be benefited by the arrangement. I know that they are not alike in their tastes or habits, and shall accommodate George by giving him another room, with a more agreeable companion, as soon as I can, for he has spoken to me about it, saying that Robert's language was sometimes very troublesome to him, and he had tried to induce him to leave off swearing, but he feared he was too firmly wedded to it to change. But, Mr. Wilder, many and many's the time I have passed that boy's room nights, and heard his prayers for his room-mate ; and one night, I heard him beg him to go to a meeting at the Young Men's Christian Association, and they went ; George coming home early, while

Robert did not come in till very late, and was very noisy, and used bad words. It was the very next day that George spoke to me first about changing his room, and he felt bad enough when he did it. I don't know but I have done wrong in keeping them together so long ; I will see that George is better accommodated, this very week." Mrs. Rice was obliged to stop to take breath, giving Mr. Wilder an opportunity to make some inquiries about Robert Ashley.

"Where is this Robert employed, and why was he selected to go to my store? Could no other have been procured?"

"I will tell you, sir. He had just done his dinner and had come up to see George, as all the boarders had before him, and was asking some questions about it, when suddenly the thought struck George that you ought to know about it (I don't think he was exactly himself till that minute), and he wanted to send back your bank book ; and Robert spoke up, says he, "I'll take it down, and tell him all about it, before I go to my store." This

relieved George's mind very much, and I suppose it relieved your mind to hear about your money, too."

"Yes, I was somewhat relieved when I did hear, but it was not till a very late hour this afternoon ; and I had opportunity to surmise and fear a hundred things before the message was delivered, and then the messenger did not tell me a word about my money being safe."

"Why, Mr. Wilder, how you talk ! As soon as George came to his senses, and knew it was his duty to let you know, he called to me to bring his coat. He then told me to take out the bank book, that he sent by Robert ; and he told him to tell you that he had your money all safe ; and after Robert had gone, he told me to take the pocket-book from another pocket, and take his trunk key and lock up the money till you should come or send. O, how the poor boy would have suffered if he had known you was in suspense so long. Why, what did you think ?"

Mr. Wilder did not enlighten her on his thoughts upon the subject, and she continued :

"Robert left here before half past one, and said he would go straight to your store. O, he's a dreadful boy." Again proffering aid, and requesting permission to pay Mrs. Rice for the extra services George might require during his illness, — an offer which that lady almost indignantly refused, — Mr. Wilder took his leave, promising to call the next day.

As he was walking home, his mind filled with the agreeable sequel to his fears, his eye rested on the illuminated sign of the Commercial College which George had been attending; and, being acquainted with the Principal, he could not resist the temptation to add more to his stock of information about George. And this he desired, not so much for the purpose of satisfying himself, as to be able still better to rebut the rumors and prejudices and reports of others, for he was himself thoroughly convinced that in no way had George deviated from the strict path of rectitude. He found the gentleman in his office, and after a few general remarks on business, Mr. Wilder inquired as to

the school, number of pupils, &c., remarking, "You have a lad on your catalogue, I believe, who is in my employ."

"Have I?" then, in the same breath, "O, yes, George Hutchins; a good boy, a very good boy, sir. He is a constant comer every night but two in the week, and he comes here to *learn*; no excuse to be rid of home restraint in his coming here. Yes, sir, I think you do well if you appreciate him; he will live to make his mark yet."

"He is confined to his room now from the effects of an accident, which might have been very serious." Mr. Wilder then detailed the circumstances of the day's casualty.

"I certainly hope he will soon be able to be about," replied the teacher, "for I have formed a somewhat unusual regard for him for so short an acquaintance."

Mr. Wilder found his tea waiting, and a fresh group of sympathizers, when he had told them the cause of his tardiness, and Mrs. Wilder and Ella were deeply interested in the condition of the lad, and loud in their praises of his kindness of heart.

"It is just like him, father," said Mrs. Wilder, "I have always liked that boy since the first day I saw him."

Ella laughed and cried by turns, at the thought of her playmate's rescue and the accident which had befallen George in effecting it, till Mr. Wilder could not, if a fortune had been offered him as the premium, have whispered to that interested little audience one syllable of the suspicion which he was now heartily ashamed of having entertained even for an instant.

They were just seating themselves in the parlor after tea, when Mr. and Mrs. Barrett entered, the former remarking that he could not rest at home without seeing Mr. Wilder about George, and what should be done for him.

"I owe the preservation of the life of my child to that boy," he said, and "I am able, thank God, to prove to him how noble a fellow I think him. Come, now, name it; whatever you tell me to do, I will agree to have done." Mr. Wilder at this point had a nervous twitch-

ing at his heart, for he could not help feeling that he too owed the boy something for allowing his trust in him to be in any way shaken, and it was probably for this reason that he thoughtfully replied, "I should suggest a delay of a few days, until George is able to be about ; for, according to present appearances, it will not be long before he will be well enough to resume his duties at the store ; then we will consult together about the matter, for I feel almost as deeply grateful to God for the safety of your daughter, and to George as the instrument by which it was accomplished, as yourself, and shall consequently claim a portion of the privilege myself." This being settled satisfactorily, they soon after separated for the night.



CHAPTER V.

DISTRESS AND RELIEF.

THE next morning, Mrs. Wilder having prepared a basket of grapes and pears, sent a messenger to Mrs. Rice's to inquire about George's condition, and Mr. Wilder delayed his departure for his store until the servant returned, who brought the gratifying intelligence that the night had been a comfortable one, and he was able to sit up, with a prospect of being well enough to be out in two or three days.

While Mr. Wilder was waiting at his house for the return of the servant who had been sent to inquire after George, the uncle of the latter, having that morning returned from the West, via New York,

called at the store to see his nephew. Not finding either him or Mr. Wilder, he inquired for George of Mr. Butler, who replied, in his peculiar manner, "I don't know anything about him. He went to the bank yesterday, and didn't come back, and I haven't heard anything of him or the thousand dollars he drew. Towards night one of his rowdyish companions came in, and said he'd got run over, or something of the kind, I don't remember exactly what; but judging from the style of the company he goes in, and the late hours he keeps, I guess his praying don't do him much good. Perhaps Mr. Wilder may know something more about him when he comes, but I don't; he probably will never show his head here again."

How much longer he would have continued in this strain, would have depended probably on the patience and attention of his listener. But Mr. Wood could stop to hear no more; he quickly left the store for George's boarding-house, thinking of only

one thing all the way, "Can George have been drawn into bad company? Is it possible that his mother's prayers and his own oft-repeated statements of dedication to God forever have all been in vain? And then the money? He never dreamed of his being dishonest! He could not, he would not, he did not believe it; but he was determined to go and see and hear for himself. He found the sick lad quite comfortable, and requesting his attendants to leave them, they were soon alone.

"George, I never had occasion in my life to speak to you in the manner and on the subject which now saddens my heart. On going into your store this morning, on my way from the depot, I inquired for you of the book-keeper, Mr. Wilder not being in, who, in very peculiar language, told me that your associations were very bad; that you were often seen out late at night; that you were sent yesterday to draw one thousand dollars from the bank, which has never been received, and what is worse than all, if all the rest could

be explained, he says you are bringing a reproach on the holy cause of religion. George, if this be true, it will break your mother's heart."

Surprise was the emotion on George's countenance as his uncle slowly commenced his remarks, but ere he had concluded, that had passed away, and unutterable grief took its place: a look of despair, almost. "O, what do you mean? Speak quick! I can bear it, bear all; only tell me; tell me what he means."

"I do not know," said his uncle, "but from his manner, I thought it something so well established as fact, that you could tell me; besides, I could not stop to hear more from him."

"O, uncle, I must go this minute to the store, see Mr. Wilder, and learn all from his lips. What does he mean about the money? I kept it safe for him, sent for him, and gave it into his own hands, all right. I have been misunderstood, perhaps misrepresented. I know I was not a favorite

of Mr. Butler's, but I tried *so* hard to please him, hoping he would learn to like me. Mr. Wilder did not say one word last night that I had done wrong. Who has been so cruel to me? for, uncle, I am not conscious of having done one thing wrong since I entered the employ of Mr. Wilder;" adding reverently, as he lifted his tearful eyes to Heaven, "God knows I have not. I will go to the store at once;" saying this, he arose suddenly before Mr. Wood could interpose; but his strength failed him, and he fell back, almost unconscious, in his chair.

"No, George, you are not able," said Mr. Wood, as soon as his nephew had revived; "but I will go and see Mr. Wilder, and from his lips learn all. I believe you innocent, George, and you may rely on me as your protector."

"Not altogether," said George, looking toward heaven, while a faint approach to a smile lighted his features for a moment, and but for a moment.

“No, not altogether, George, but with God’s help I will see you righted. You shall know from headquarters in what your fault lies, and how much you have been blamed. I will return as soon as I have had an interview.”

As Mr. Wood arose to go, a fresh outburst of grief on George’s part, compelled his uncle to remain longer ; and it was a long time before the young man was sufficiently composed to be safe to leave. Mr. Wood was perfectly satisfied in his own mind, that George was entirely innocent of the charges alleged, and went with all possible speed to Mr. Wilder’s store.

As soon as the servant had returned and reported on George’s condition, Mr. Wilder went to his store ; and as he passed into his private office to examine his morning mail, he took the opportunity to say, “Mr. Butler, after a thorough examination into George’s course during his connection with us, I am persuaded of his integrity and upright deportment, and look upon all efforts to injure his reputation as emanating from one of two causes : either

wilful misrepresentation, to satisfy personal purposes, or false information, based on total ignorance of the whole affair. George will be able to be at the store, God willing, and attend to his duties next week, and I shall expect you to treat him with at least more civility than has been your custom. Here is the thousand dollars: amid all the excitement of the trying hour in which he was injured in saving the life of another, he held on to his pocket-book, and despatched a messenger to me yesterday as soon as he recovered his consciousness, requesting me to go or send to his house and get it, too honest to trust the funds in the hands of another. The messenger negligently failed to deliver his message properly, and, on my arrival at his house, I found that, notwithstanding his physical sufferings, he had been cautious enough to have the money placed in his trunk, the trunk locked, and the key put under the pillow that supported his bruised and aching head. Does this look like a double-faced boy? There is more that I may

say to you of him at another time, but let me assure you that you are entirely in the wrong when you charge him with any of the errors you alleged." No answer was expected, and no audible one vouchsafed, but an angry mutter, unheard by Mr. Wilder, was returned, which, if reduced to language, would have said, "I'll fix him yet."

The business of the early morning over, — it occupied about half an hour, — Mr. Wilder despatched a note to Mr. Thomas, George's Sunday school teacher, requesting his presence at the counting-room of the former, if convenient ; to which a favorable response was returned, and soon that gentleman made his appearance. Mr. Wilder rehearsed to him his experiences of the preceding day and night, adding, "I am now perfectly satisfied that although you have seen George in the company of that Robert Ashley, he was not with him for any harm, and that all their intercourse at home or abroad has been, on George's part, for the sole purpose of benefiting his roommate. I have heard an excellent report of

him from Mrs. Rice, with whom he boards, and from the teacher of the evening school which he has been attending for a short time. This, taken in connection with my experience with him here, on week days, and what you and I have both seen on Sundays and at evening meetings, is, I feel, proof positive, that what we looked upon as improper companionship for him, was undoubtedly seriously annoying to him, and only tolerated in the hope that he might be the means, in the hand of God, of doing good. I propose to call on him on my way home to-night, and if you will accompany me, I am sure he will be happy to see us both."

"With all my heart ; I will call for you at five. You have removed a heavy load from my mind, and I sincerely sympathize with him in his misfortune."

Mr. Thomas was just leaving the store, when Mr. Wood entered Mr. Wilder's office.

"Good morning, Mr. Wood ; a fine morning. Your nephew met with quite a severe accident yesterday ; but how providential that it

was not more serious ; it might have cost him his life, or maimed him."

Mr. Wood had time while Mr. Wilder was speaking, to think,—“ Well, this does not look like crimination. But perhaps he does not know all that the book-keeper has told me ; he surely cannot know the worst, or he would not appear so agreeable to me.” Then aloud, “ Yes, it is really a cause for rejoicing that his life was spared. But you are probably in possession of more of the particulars than I, for I was away from home when the accident occurred, and only returned this morning, and all the details I have heard were the little your book-keeper seemed to know, before you came in this morning, and what I could gather from George, whose sick room I have just left, and he is so distressed in his mind that I could learn but little of the cause or circumstances of the case.”

“ Distressed in mind ? Why, he’s the last person on earth to be distressed in mind, Mr. Wood. I do believe, that had it pleased the Almighty in his wisdom to take George

away from this world of sin and sorrow, he could have made his appearance before his Creator with a cleaner record than some of us who have lived longer and professed more ; and if his was a mind to be affected by adulation, he would not be much disturbed on that score, for we all think his conduct on that occasion praiseworthy, while Mr. Barrett is determined on making a hero of him. But what do you mean by his being distressed in mind ? ”

Mr. Wood then informed him of his interview in the morning with the book-keeper, who gave him to understand that George had been guilty of flagrant acts of impropriety, some of which he particularized, but in such a spirit of exultation as to be extremely painful, and he sought George as soon as possible, to know what it all meant, expecting of course a confession ; but was astonished to find, first, that he had done nothing wrong, and second, that he had no idea that he had been suspected of so doing. He continued : “ I have therefore left him in a state of terrible suspense,

and after you have told me all you are willing or at liberty to, I shall return to the poor sufferer, to cheer or condole, as the circumstances may warrant. If these charges your book-keeper has insinuated are true, I shall never place confidence in humanity again ; if they are false, a terrible responsibility rests somewhere, for George's spirit is nearly broken by the shock."

"Mr. Wood, I owe you a full and candid statement of all I know in the matter, both for your sake and that of your nephew. My intention was never to allude to it again to a living creature. My wife knows nothing of it, and, to tell you the truth, I am heartily ashamed to have allowed myself to think ill for a moment of one who has exhibited nothing but fidelity since his first connection with my establishment. This I make as a preliminary apology, if you please to consider it such. As I said before, I intended to remain silent on this subject, but as my book-keeper has been so indiscreet as to allude in this equivocal way to the affair,

I will tell you all I know. A report reached me only yesterday, that George had some unprincipled associates. My clerk referred to him besides, in language intended to convince me of his certain knowledge that your nephew was pursuing a dissolute course, and his very mysterious and continued absence, without a word of apology or explanation, till a late hour yesterday, and even then, the explanation given in a very unsatisfactory manner by the messenger (who proved to be the very boy whose association with George had so damaged his reputation, if not his character), confirmed my suspicions that the information was correct. Again, he was sent to draw a check for one thousand dollars, in small bills, to be used here in various disbursements, and I had no word of him, or the money, till the informer came at a late hour; then, even on questioning him about the money, the messenger appeared to know nothing, and his equivocal reply led me to suspect the worst. Bowed down with the conviction that my confidence had been abused, I repaired to Mrs. Rice's,

and had an interview with George in the presence of Mr. Barrett, the life of whose child he had saved, and which was of course unfavorable for much of the conversation I desired ; but during which, after many attempts to gain the opportunity, George motioned me to take from under his pillow the key of his trunk, in which I found my money all safe. Instead of being dishonest, he had displayed a caution remarkable for one of his years, particularly when his condition is considered. Thus, one of the heavy loads was taken from my mind. There was something, too, in his manner, his resignation under the affliction, that savored more of heaven than earth. Leaving him, I sought an interview with Mrs. Rice, who gave me such a glowing account of the consistent Christian character he had always sustained, and such a satisfactory explanation of the causes leading him into the society of this prodigal youth, the connection of whose name with George gave rise to all the trouble, that after leaving his presence I could entertain towards myself but one

emotion. I was, sir, ashamed that I could ever have listened for a moment to the stories which I fear were made by some jealous, evil-disposed person or persons, for the express purpose of ruining the boy." Then, in a suppressed tone, "My book-keeper has been with me a long time, and I can only account for his zeal in this matter by the interest he takes in my business. I am led to this belief, as I know it was through his penetration that the dishonesty of George's predecessor was discovered. But if it be that only, I must say his devotion has in this case overbalanced his judgment. I think I have said enough, Mr. Wood, to convince you that if I ever did really suspect George of improprieties, that suspicion has been entirely removed, and I consider him purer, in consequence of this fire of tribulation."

"Mr. Wilder, I thank you; and I thank God for the lad's acquittal from suspicion, and look upon the whole affair as intended by the Almighty as a lesson for him and for us, and may it do us all good, is my earnest prayer."

A hearty "Amen" was Mr. Wilder's reply.

Mr. Wood lost no time in apprising George of the favorable turn affairs had taken, and this time, George's tears were of joy and gratitude ; joy, that he had never been guilty of the crime, and gratitude to his heavenly Father, who had thrown his protecting arm around him, and answered his prayer, "Deliver me from evil."

As soon as Mr. Wood had left, Mr. Wilder called his book-keeper, and said, "Mr. Butler, your impressions with regard to George, are entirely unfounded. I regret exceedingly that you should be so cruel as to endeavor to blight the prospects in life of a young man whose promise is so fair for a useful and happy future, without more evidence to support you. I had intended to say nothing more on the subject ; but as you gave Mr. Wood, the uncle of the lad, a very high colored and partial idea of the affair, and added to it an imagination of your own, it is my desire now to say to you, that I shall expect you to be silent on the subject unless spoken to about it

by me. It is sufficient for you to know that I am satisfied there is no ground for suspicion that George is not everything he should be ; and if there were nothing else to disprove it, the material that composes the humanity that risks his own life to save another's, is not the stuff of which cowardly, dissipated, thieving clerks is composed."

"I assure you, Mr. Wilder," replied Mr. Butler, "I am only too happy to know I was in error, and beg pardon for my apparently unnecessary earnestness. But I did feel that I was doing right in informing you of what I believed to be wrong in George, and it affords me as much pleasure to be undeceived as you can possibly experience yourself." As he left, he would have said, if he dared, "When I try again, I will be sure of my plot."

At a little past five o'clock, Messrs. Wilder and Thomas found themselves in George's room. The sick lad was propped in an easy-chair ; a table stood near by, bearing a bouquet of fragrant flowers which Mrs. Barrett had sent him, and his Bible was at his side, where he

had placed it when the visitors were announced. The approach of Mr. Wilder, would have been the signal for an outburst of grief on George's part, had not Mr. Wilder checked him by the remark, "It is all right, George ; I am to blame, and you have only been the victim of a misrepresentation and misunderstanding, which, I am happy to say, only makes me feel more attachment towards you. You had many warm friends before, but there is not one among them who does not place more confidence in you than ever before. Now we will not allude to the matter again, at least for the present. Here is your friend Mr. Thomas, anxious to grasp your hand, and express his gratitude for your preservation from death, and to congratulate you on your appearance to-day, for you are quite improved since I saw you yesterday. By the way, you have not had your mother informed of the accident, have you ?"

"No, sir ; I thought it would alarm her, and as I shall probably be able so soon to go out of doors, I concluded to postpone any

account of it, until I could tell her with truth that I was entirely well."

"Just right," said both gentlemen ; and Mr. Wilder added, "I was just about to suggest the same thing. Now, George, you are decidedly better, are you not?"

"O, yes, sir ; I am almost entirely free from pain, and feel as if I was gaining strength every hour."

"I am very glad to hear it ; you will soon be able to go out."

The three then entered into a general conversation, carefully excluding any mention of the sad affair of which they could not help thinking. They staid about an hour, during which time Mrs. Rice came in with his toast and tea ; for she would allow no one else to minister to the wants of her pet, now he was sick. At last, they rose to go ; Mr. Wilder remarking, "Now we will leave you, and if you think of anything you would like to have sent you, just mention it, and I will see you supplied."

"No, sir, I thank you. I have had two

splendid presents to-day, from Mrs. Wilder and Mrs. Barrett, and have no wants ungratified." Then turning to Mr. Thomas, who was taking George's hand to bid him good evening, "There is one desire, however, which I fear must remain unsatisfied," he said, with a smile.

"What is that?" asked Mr. Thomas.

"I shall not be able to be present with you to-morrow in the Sabbath school; but I shall not forget you, and when the hour comes you may think of me," holding up his Bible, "as studying this, and trying to pray that your labors may be blessed."

"Good by," and "God bless you," was heartily said by all, and they took their leave.



CHAPTER VI.

HEROISM AND INTEGRITY REWARDED.

CHARLES BUTLER, the book-keeper and cashier of the house of Wilder and Clark, was a native of New Hampshire, in which State he was educated, and from which, at the age of seventeen years, he came to Boston, for the purpose of procuring employment. His parents were in very moderate circumstances, but had given him the advantages of a good common-school education ; and they had also given him, as as well as the rest of the children, faithful religious instruction. His efforts to obtain a situation were not so successful as he had anticipated ; and he was not long in learning, that highly as he estimated his own

abilities, and higher as they really were, in comparison with the majority in the little village where he first saw the light, they failed of appreciation in the great metropolis, where he had vainly hoped his commanding form and personal charms, with his mental acquirements, which he valued so much, would speedily merit approval, and command a high price. But in this he was mistaken ; it was not so easy to secure a position, and he was glad at last to accept a situation as entry clerk, at moderate compensation, in order to secure the means of subsistence.

He fortunately had been very attentive to his duties, and through the influence of the chief book-keeper of the concern he had been with, he was soon offered and accepted a similar position in the counting-room of his present employer ; and a year or two later, the book-keeper having an opportunity to enter into business on his own account, left, and Mr. Wilder promoted him to the position he had now held five years.

His business qualifications were good, and

it is but fair to state that Mr. Wilder had implicit confidence in his integrity. Toward *him*, Mr. Butler had always appeared in his best disguise,—and it was nothing else,—for at heart he would have had no hesitation to resort to any means to accomplish his selfish purposes. But his cunning was so well masked by fawning civility, that even the naturally quick perception of his employer had failed to detect anything wrong. He was always at his post, early and late ; he asked for no vacations, and never desired to absent himself from his desk for more than one day at a time.

This devotion to business, rendered it necessary to employ no permanent assistance in his department ; and yet, this incessant labor, which he voluntarily performed, was not, after all, prompted by regard for his employer's interest, as the sequel will prove ; and his oft-repeated objections to the introduction of a new clerk, and the systematized course of premeditated abuse with which each new comer was always treated, and which either compelled the assistant to resign or pre-

judiced Mr. Wilder so strongly that he discharged him, will be accounted for ere long.

George was able to resume his duties at the store, on the Thursday succeeding the Saturday night on which he received the visit of Mr. Wilder and Mr. Thomas, and was welcomed by no one with more apparent cordiality than by Mr. Butler. And the changed appearance of the book-keeper so affected our young friend (who was so frank himself as not to be able to detect artfulness in others), that in a letter to his mother that very day, in which he rehearsed the incidents of the accident, he alluded to the alteration in Mr. Butler's manner, and expressed the hope that he should be able to conduct himself so that it would always be as pleasant, and added, "If I can have matters move just as they do now, I shall be perfectly satisfied, for I know my duty, and with the confidence of *all* here, I can give satisfaction."

On the next Monday afternoon, Mr. Wilder told George that he was going to have a few friends at his house that evening, and he

should be happy to see him about eight o'clock. The church clock was just striking that hour as he pulled the bell-knob of his employer's residence.

George had never been in society much, and when he had, it had been in his mother's company, and during his residence in the city he had had no opportunities to improve his tastes in that direction, if even he possessed any ; so when he was ushered into the large, brilliantly-lighted parlor, and found there several ladies and gentlemen, he would have made a rapid exit, could he have done so with any degree of propriety ; but Mrs. Wilder approached, and her kind manner reassured him.

An introduction followed, and he found himself in the company of Mr. and Mrs. Barrett, their daughter Mary, (whom he had once before met, but in rather an unfavorable position for the maintenance of a tête-à-tête), Mr. and Mrs. Thomas, and a few others whom he had never met before, while in a corner, unobserved previously, were his uncle and aunt, Mr. and Mrs. Wood. George wondered how *they* came to be there.

The conversation at first, as a matter of course, turned upon the accident, and their delight at his entire restoration to health ; and so many complimentary epithets were heaped upon him, that he was tempted to cry, " Hold ! enough ! " and in fact did say that he had done nothing but his duty, and what he would do again did necessity call.

Later in the evening, Mr. Wilder addressing the whole company, spoke as follows : —

" Ladies and Gentlemen : Less than a fortnight ago, as most of you are aware, the life of Mary Barrett was in jeopardy, and our young friend present, at the imminent risk of his own life, rescued her, and in so doing was injured, fortunately not seriously, and his presence here to-night affords us an opportunity of expressing to him the esteem in which he is held by us all. It is not my purpose to make the occasion a formal one, but I should defeat the object of the interview did I fail to express myself in a somewhat ceremonious manner.

" George, the circumstances of that incident

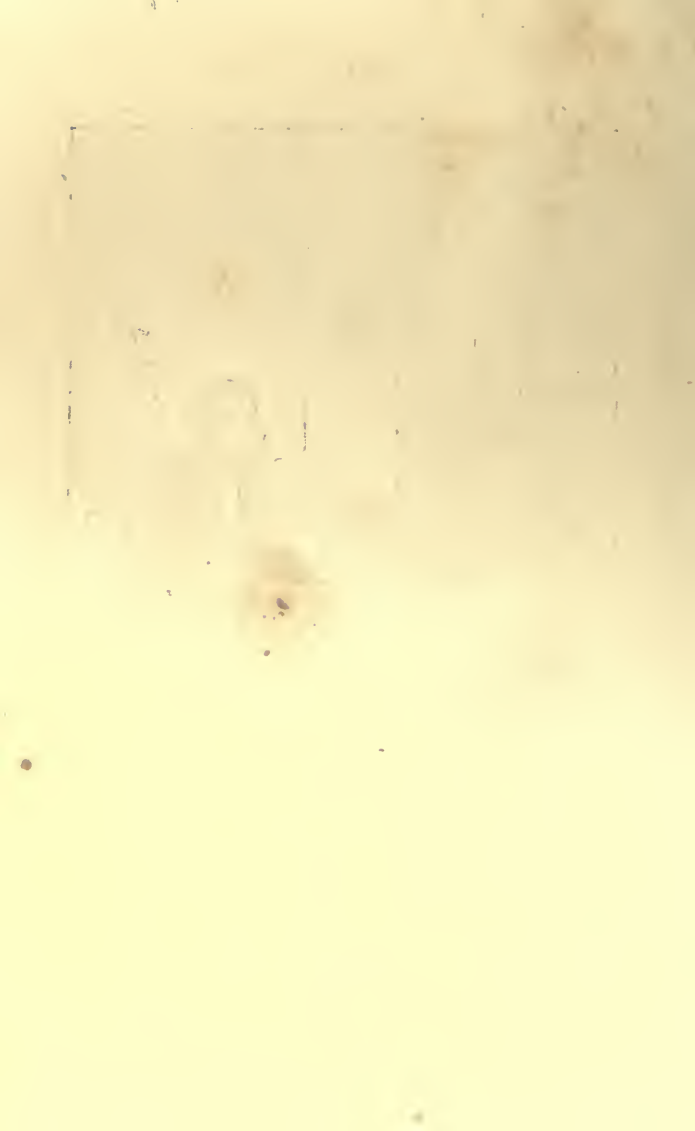
are fresh in the minds of all present, as also the self-sacrificing disposition which prompted your action in the premises.

“The father of the miss, has requested me to say to you in his behalf, as well as that of her mother, that he thanks you from the bottom of his heart; and wherever you are, and in whatever circumstances, he shall watch over your interests; and if at any time it is in his power to assist you, you must feel at perfect liberty to apply to him. He also desired me to say something else, but as I think he will do himself better justice than would any feeble words of mine, I will resume my seat, and in doing so, call on Mr. Horace Barrett.”

That gentleman, in response to the call, replied as follows :—

“When I requested Mr. Wilder to personate me in the brief remarks he has made, I supposed he would do it, and not leave me in the lurch; but as it is, I must do the best I can. I did not decline, as you well know, because I fail to appreciate the immense debt of grati-





tude I owe to my young friend, but because my heart is so full, that I feared my feelings would overpower me, and that what was intended as an agreeable reunion of friends, (to welcome one, who, heretofore unknown to most of us, has by his action in a time of peril so conducted as to attach him deeply to myself and those whom I represent on this occasion), would become, through my weakness, more a mournful season than the joyful one it should be.

“So, without enlarging on the more personal features of the matter, which I hope to have frequent occasion to refer to when George and I see each other alone, I will conclude by requesting you, George, to accept the contents of this sealed envelope, as expressive, in a feeble degree, of the heartfelt gratitude which no act of mine can ever repay. Receive it, not as a remuneration for services rendered,—for the consciousness of having done a worthy deed is its own reward,—but as a slight testimonial of my personal regard. You will please allow it to remain sealed until your arrival at home.

"I am requested by Mrs. Barrett to present to you, in her name, the accompanying watch and chain, which you will always preserve, not for its intrinsic value, but in memory of the donor.

"As it will not be of any service to you unless it is kept correct, and therefore to be relied on, so you are reminded that you must always be correct in your habits, and thus merit and enjoy the confidence of all with whom you are brought in contact. As in order to be truthful and worthy of reliance, the hands must always be at work, never idle, so God never intended *our* hands to be idle, but to work with both heart and hands well, whenever and wherever he directs. And as by reference to it you will be reminded of the rapid flight of time, you and we all may ever feel that the time for us to labor is short, and the day of life is fast passing away, and the night of death will soon come when no man can work. May we all so live, that, when the summons comes to leave this world, we may have the comforting reflection that it is in some degree better for our having lived.

“I have now but a word to add. When I mentioned at home that I intended to make you some expression of regard, Mrs. Barrett warmly seconded my plan, and Mary very anxiously wishing to participate, at the same time made a suggestion, and I very soon had an opportunity to gratify her desires. Her idea was, and we considered it an excellent one, to secure as a present to your good mother, in some substantial form, a picture of yourself, feeling that however slight, in a pecuniary point of view, the offering is, it will be cherished by her more sacredly, than any other token could.

“To accomplish this purpose, I induced your uncle, Mr. Wood, to furnish me with a picture of yourself, which I have had copied in an enlarged form and framed, and now take pleasure in exhibiting to the company ; it shall be forwarded to your kind parent, with an appropriate note.

“Should I take my seat now, Mary would consider my message half unsaid, my duty but partially performed. From the same

source, I procured a photograph, said to be a striking likeness of one, George, whom you love better than all the world beside, and next to your heavenly Father. I have *it* copied in a large frame, and am now happy to present to you a picture of your mother, to be hung in your own room.

“I know you will never look at it without deriving some fresh incentive to right, and may you never see it when the glance it conveys may be a silent rebuke for any act committed that she would disapprove. Long may she live to continue to set you the good example you esteem so highly, and which I believe you are endeavoring to follow, and long may you live to cheer her heart ; and that you may grow up to be a useful member of society, and the instrument in God’s hands of doing much good, is the heartfelt prayer of a family who will never forget you.”

The whole affair of the presentation was an entire surprise to George, and all the circumstances combined rendered his astonishment complete. He was unable to respond ;

but his uncle came to his rescue, and in a few words thanked the generous donors, and in behalf of George accepted the presents, promising for him that they should never find that their confidence had been misplaced.

The company soon after adjourned to the dining-room and partook of refreshments, then returned to the parlor, where a short time was spent in general conversation, which placed George at his ease for the first time that night, and which he improved in becoming a little better acquainted with the young lady he had met for the first time in Court Street.

As it was getting late, the company soon dispersed to their several homes, Mr. and Mrs. Wood conveying George to his boarding-house in their carriage.

George ran up to his room (he had been furnished with a small single room through Mrs. Rice's kindness, for which she demanded but a small advance), and, as was natural, opened very quickly the sealed envelope Mr. Barrett had given him. He found it to contain a certificate of deposit at the bank, to

the credit of George Hutchins, for one thousand dollars! He could hardly believe his senses. He looked again and again; read it over and over. It was, indeed, so; it was not all a dream, as he had thought it at first.

He then hung his mother's picture in a conspicuous place, wound his watch carefully, and put it away safely, together with his recently acquired fortune; then sat down and wrote his mother a full account of the occurrences of the evening. After finishing the letter, he read his accustomed portion of Scripture, knelt by his bedside, and offered a prayer of thankfulness to God; and placing himself in his heavenly Father's keeping, took a good-night look at the sweet face of his mother, and was soon fast asleep.

The next morning, as he descended to the breakfast-table, he found himself a little late; and as he passed along the table to take his usual place, the chain attached to his vest attracted the attention of Robert Ashley, who, in his characteristic way, remarked, "I guess somebody's feeling pretty grand this

morning! What time is it? Trade's pretty good this fall, ain't it?"

Of course all eyes were directed towards George, who bashfully stammered out, "It is a present I received last night;" at the same time, drawing it from his pocket, he passed the watch and chain to Mrs. Rice for her inspection, and that of the rest. "It is a perfect beauty. O, I am so glad! You well deserve it." Everybody had some kind or congratulatory words to say, but Robert; he seemed to feel considerably troubled over George's "streak of luck," as he called it, and continued in a strain of language which had the effect of only annoying George, while it aroused the indignation of all the rest, for he was a great favorite; and so discontented did he become, that he made no allusion to his other presents, although his frankness would have led him ordinarily to tell all: he was no lover of secrecy.

As soon as he found a favorable opportunity to see Mr. Wilder alone, George asked his advice as to the course to pursue with

his recently acquired capital. His advice was to draw the amount and make a deposit in the Savings Bank, where it would bear interest ; allowing the whole to remain until he should become of age. This suggestion met with George's approbation, and they went that very morning and carried it into practice, George receiving a book, in which the amount was recorded.



CHAPTER VII.

FIRST VISIT HOME.

MRS. HUTCHINS had just finished the letter received from her son, when the expressman called with the package and letter which Mr. Barrett had promised to forward—a large-size picture of George; and it was perfect. How long she looked at it, how affectionately she kissed it, and how tenderly she pressed it to her bosom! Why did her eyes fill with tears? She had nothing to weep over in her son's conduct, and she could have no anxiety about his health, for had he not written that he was perfectly well? Why was all this? Those of my readers who have received similar souvenirs from

loved absent ones, can answer in their hearts.

So long did she gaze, and so much had she to say and think about, that she entirely forgot the letter which accompanied the picture, and it would be difficult to say when she would have thought of it, had not a knock at the door compelled her to rise, causing it to fall from her lap to the floor. On her return, she opened it, and read as follows:—

“BOSTON, November 18, 18—.”

“MY DEAR MADAM: A short time since, my daughter, in attempting to cross a street, was knocked down by the horses attached to an omnibus, and would, in all probability, have been killed, but for the timely interposition of your son, who jumped forward, and extricated her from her dangerous condition, at the imminent peril of his own life; and he did not escape injury; but thanks to a kind Providence, his bruises were slight, and we are all happy to know he has entirely recovered.

“It is entirely out of the power of a parent to estimate the value of such acts of kindness, and gold and silver go but little towards liquidating such obligations. But in addition to the warm attachment myself and family will always feel towards your son, I have to-day presented him with a check for a thousand dollars, Mrs. Barrett has given him a watch and chain, and my daughter Mary (the saved one), desiring to do something, has procured the accompanying picture of George, knowing it will be of more value to you than any offering she could possibly make. Please accept it, and with it, her and our best wishes for your health and prosperity.

“I shall always feel a deep interest in the lad, which, with your permission, will partake of something akin to a father’s solicitude, without presuming to exercise a father’s authority. As he advances in life, I may perhaps, see opportunities of rendering him additional service.

“And now, madam, may God, who has for so many years, been your stay and com-

fort, and whom you have taught George to love, honor, and obey, and who I feel confident he takes for his counsellor, and tries to live to serve, be your portion through life.

"With the best wishes for your future, and his,

"I am, your obedient servant,

"HORACE BARRETT."

She would have been more than human, if, amid the falling tears which accompanied and concluded the reading of this letter, she had not experienced an emotion a very *little* like pride.

The annual Thanksgiving season was approaching, and Mr. Wilder remembered with how much pleasurable anticipation, when a boy, he always looked forward to the time when he could leave his employment, and spend a few days with his mother, who long ago was called home to her reward. So, early in the week, he told George, that he might go home on Wednesday, spend the holiday with his friends, and return on the following Monday.

This was very gratifying intelligence to George, and yet very unexpected, for his term of service had been so short with Mr. Wilder, and had been broken up withal by his recent accident, that he felt that he was not entitled to a vacation. It would have been a severe trial to him not to have gone, as he had never been away from his mother on that day, but he had schooled himself to bear the disappointment. Now he knew that he *could* go, he thanked his employer, and commenced to count the hours before he should see his mother.

At last the day arrived, and dressed in his "Sunday clothes," and a new carpet-bag in his hand (bought for the occasion, and containing a change of clothing, and the picture of his mother which he was going to carry home to show her), he arrived at the railroad station a full hour before the time for the train to start. He thought he never knew so long an hour before: at last he heard the first bell ring, then another, and the cars passed slowly through the depot, and he

was soon hurrying towards home at the rate of twenty miles an hour.

His feelings were very different now from those he experienced some three months before, when he was leaving home for the first time in his life to go among strangers; and although he had met many kind friends during his stay in Boston, his affections, instead of suffering alienation, were more firmly centred in that mother than ever before; his absence from home, giving him an opportunity to recall attractions that in a more intimate connection he had failed to appreciate.

At the proper time and place, he exchanged the cars for the coach, which, as is always the case on the day before the annual festival, was crowded, but they arrived safely at the village square, and before the old stage-house. Hastily grasping his valise, and only stopping to say "How dy'e do" to a few he met of his old friends, he was soon at the gate, met his mother half way, and was clasped in her arms.

Mental sufferings, physical pain, unkind

remarks directed, and insulting looks bestowed, were all healed and forgotten in that long, loving embrace; and for that night at least, no roof on earth sheltered a happier or more affectionate pair than "my dear George," and "my dear mother."

In the evening, when they sat down, George had to rehearse over and over again the circumstances of the accident; how he felt when he was taken up hurt; if he suffered much pain during his sickness; how long he was confined to his bed; with an exclamation of "poor boy," "dear darling," "mother's child," interlarding every answer.

Then she would say, "How you have grown! you are almost a man!" Then the watch had to be examined; the pictures brought out and gazed upon, each criticising and admiring that of the other. Then they talked of George's money at interest; then she wanted to know all about George's relations at the store; if Mr. Butler treated her boy well; how the Wilders and Barretts looked; how large the little girl was who was knocked

down by the horses ; and her expressions of sympathy with the parents were almost as tender as if it had been her own child.

All this time, or rather times, for George had to answer these questions over and over again, she would look him in the face, leaning forward, her spectacles pushed back on the top of her head, and her clean white kerchief pinned just as George had always remembered it, with a round brooch containing hair of his deceased father, and engraved in German text, "In memoriam." That was a famous welcome home.

Later in the evening, the familiar old blue ware fruit-dish, heaped up with some of George's favorite Baldwins, was brought out on the table, and at last, when the clock told them it was time to retire, they were surprised, for they could have talked till morning. The old family Bible was put on the stand, and together, as of yore, they knelt in prayer. The clause in the Governor's proclamation counselling a feeling of gratitude at thanksgiving season, was superfluous so far as this family was concerned.

The next day was Thanksgiving Day, and the principal event, the dinner, passed off as usual on such occasions, with the same amount of eating and drinking. George thought the turkey tasted better than any he had ever eaten, and the pudding and mince pies he would have known anywhere were "made by mother." O, if he could only have mother's table to sit down to always. "This is the first good meal I have had since I left home," he said. Taken for all in all, this was the happiest Thanksgiving Day either of them had ever passed.

So engaged in each other's society were they, that George did not leave his mother's house until Friday morning. After breakfast he started out for a walk, and to see Henry Clement. It was a matter of surprise to him that Henry had not called, as he had probably heard of his return, but perhaps he was ill.

He was doomed to disappointment in the reception he met, the sights he saw, and the news he heard. Entering the kitchen door,

as had been his custom, and finding no one, he passed into the dining-room; and overheard suppressed conversation interspersed with half stifled sobs. Having advanced too far to retreat honorably, he knocked, and Henry immediately came out, closing the door after him. His eyes were swollen with weeping. The meeting was as cordial on the part of both as could have been desired, but the difference in their feelings was world wide. They left the house together, when George broke the silence by the inquiry, "What is the matter, Henry?"

"O, George, we are ruined. Father says he is a bankrupt, and we are ruined, we are ruined!"

Then, in a desultory way he finally succeeded in informing George that the banker with whom his father had always done business, had become a defaulter, and absconded, bringing Mr. Clement to a condition of abject poverty; and that they would be obliged to give up all they had to their creditors, leave their house and farm, to go, they knew not where.

Sympathy, in its place, is excellent, but sympathy does not repair damages; and though George's noble heart ached for his friend, it was out of his power to render any assistance, and the sad impression it left on his mind was long in becoming thoroughly effaced.

The rest of the week, Friday and Saturday, he spent in visiting his friends, in some instances accompanied by his mother.

At last, the Sabbath came, the day of all the rest he had been anticipating, and, with his mother, he entered the familiar old house of prayer. How natural all seemed to him! The audience more homespun in attire, were more devotional in manner than some he had observed in his city church; while the sermon of the good old pastor, although it would have been called less eloquent than the efforts of some of the better educated clergymen in the metropolis, had the effect to fix the attention and soften the heart, and was, what may not, perhaps always be said of *some* sermons, within their comprehension.

But it was in the Sabbath school that he felt the most at home. His teacher and all his old companions were in their places, just as they used to sit when he was a regular attendant, and he occupied his accustomed seat in the corner. And that teacher,—why, it seemed to him that, next to his mother, he loved him better than any one else on earth. He it was to whom George had applied for counsel when he first felt himself a sinner, and it was his remark, that he can never forget, “give yourself unreservedly to Christ.” How those words rang in his ears that night!—it was just about a year ago;—they continued to ring until he reached his little chamber, when, throwing himself on his knees, he said, “Take me, Lord, just as I am;” and peace flowed in’ on his soul.

Yes, everything seemed to remind him of the goodness of God; and yet it was reserved for that evening prayer-meeting to fill his heart with love to his Saviour, as he knelt in that little gathering, and united his voice with theirs, in praise and adoration.

There were not many there; but the presence of God, promised to two or three gathering together in his name, was vouchsafed to that little company. Henry Clement was there, but George had no opportunity to say a word to him, as there were so many others present from a distance who would not probably have another opportunity to see him for a long time, and all wanted to say one word to him, or at least shake his hand. Henry's presence did not surprise George; for although he had not usually attended the evening meetings, it was not strange that he should have come on this occasion, perhaps from motives of curiosity, for he knew George would be there.

George and his mother had an unusually interesting and solemn devotional circle that night—his last night—the last for nearly a year; for he had no reason to expect another vacation until the summer.

Early the next morning, as George and his mother were at the breakfast-table, saying their farewell words, Henry came in, calmer,

apparently, than when they met on Friday, but still he looked sad. He desired to see George alone for a moment, and they together walked into the garden. "George, do you remember the Sunday before you left to go to Boston, that you told me that you wished I was a Christian, and asked me to promise you that I would give my heart to God?"

"I do," replied George, distinctly.

"Well, George, those words have been in my mind ever since, and whatever I would do, whether it was work or pleasure, they would come up before me. If it was pleasure, I would try to drive off the feeling, but to no purpose; then I would promise myself that I would do as you requested, but something else would intervene, and I would set another time; but our late trouble has now decided me. I am determined to live, from this moment, a different life. I feel myself a sinner, and am now prepared to give my heart to God. Will he accept me? Will you pray for me?"

George's reply was in action, not in words,

for he silently drew Henry's arm through his, and they sought that familiar chamber — familiar to both boys; there they had sat, talked, and played together; and especially familiar to George, for there he had consecrated himself to God, and had enjoyed many a rich season of communion with Heaven there.

Kneeling down, George, in a fervent petition, asked God for Christ's sake to accept the penitent one. Henry followed him, broken down with emotion, and plead with Heaven for acceptance, acknowledging his past remissness, and crying, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" when almost in the same breath, he was able to burst out in a prayer of thanksgiving for redeeming grace. It was reserved to George, as his last happiest moment during his whole stay at home, to know that his dear young friend was now his companion heavenward.

Descending to Mrs. Hutchins's presence, George was obliged to leave his now rejoicing associate in his mother's care, and hastily prepared for his return.

The hour for his departure at last came, and after their words, of farewell had been repeated several times, George took his seat in the stage, waved a kiss to his mother, promised to write her and Henry soon, and was driven rapidly away.

He presented himself at the store the next day, refreshed in body and mind for the few days of relaxation he had enjoyed, and for the blessed incident with which his trip concluded, and entered with renewed zeal into his daily routine of duty.

Mr. Butler, the only one whom he seemed to fear, still preserved the show of good feeling he had so suddenly assumed a few days after the accident, while Mr. Wilder asked him about his mother's health, and how he had enjoyed himself, hoped he would not be homesick, &c., to all of which George gave appropriate replies, and then told Mr. Wilder of the conversion of his friend as being the pleasantest episode of the whole trip.



CHAPTER VIII.

A ROBBERY AND AN ARREST.

GEORGE'S history during his stay in Boston had been an eventful one ; but for several weeks after his return, nothing occurred to disturb his equanimity, until one morning, on rising to dress, he looked for his watch and chain, and lo ! they were gone. He remembered distinctly putting them in their accustomed place (in a case presented by his mother, and which he kept hanging by the side of his looking-glass), when he was preparing to retire ; and where could they have gone ? when could they have gone ? and by whose hands ?

Throwing on his clothes, he ran down stairs to tell Mrs. Rice, and ask if anything else had

been taken from the house. They made a search, and to their astonishment found the box containing silver had been broken open, and all the pieces from one of the apartments, the most valuable, were gone.

Now what was to be done? They examined the front door, the back door, the windows, but no clue to the ingress or egress of the burglar could be found. They looked at each other. Many were the suggestions, and many the inquiries, but all resulted in nothing; they simply knew that they had been robbed. The breakfast that morning was partaken of by few of that party, with relish.

George was almost crazy. "If it had been anything but my present," he thought. He, however, after a more diligent search in places where he would never have dreamed of putting it, concluded to go to the store, tell Mr. Wilder, and act on his advice. How impatient he was, till that gentleman came. He did not tell Mr. Butler; he was going to, but he could not face that cold sarcasm with which he felt sure the news would be received.

By and by, Mr. Wilder came in, and George told him. His reply was, "Your first duty is to notify the police force," and offered to accompany him to the office of the Chief of Police, and a detective was detailed to "work up the case."

The officer first examined the premises where the robbery was committed, thoroughly ; then, without expressing an opinion to any one, turned to Mrs. Rice and George, and asked them if they suspected any one. They both replied that they most certainly did not. He took from Mrs. Rice a full description of the missing silver ware, and then turning to George, asked him where he got the watch. George replied that it was a present from Mr. Horace Barrett, giving the officer that gentleman's residence.

"Did you take a memorandum, or do you know the number of the watch, or any description of the property?"

"No, sir."

"Was it new or second-hand?"

"A new one, sir."

"Show me where Mr. Barrett lives ;" and George pointed the way, accompanying the officer.

Of course Mr. Barrett felt badly, but it was through sympathy for George, as he had been guilty of no carelessness ; and if he had, he was suffering so intensely that no one could have a heart to criminate *him*.

The detective inquired of Mr. Barrett if *he* had a memorandum of the number of the watch, or any peculiarities about it ; he had neglected this precaution, but went with his two visitors at once to the place where the articles were purchased, and from the jeweller received all the information desired, which the officer noted down on his memorandum-book and departed, promising to use every exertion in his power to secure the restoration of the property, but without enlightening them in any way as to his proposed plan. The whole matter being left in safe hands, the trio separated, each to his respective pursuits.

George tried to fix his mind on his duties,

but it was impossible ; and his frequent errors and absent-mindedness drew upon him as frequently the severe reprimands of Mr. Butler, who seemed to be delighted to have an excuse for exercising his authority, which he did effectually, winding up the morning by threatening to apprise Mr. Wilder of his carelessness and neglect.

The dinner hour, which was usually an occasion of recreation, failed to accomplish its accustomed purpose this day, and George returned to the store more unfitted for labor than he was before. Mr. Butler, however, it would seem, had recuperated his faculties, and he came back more irascible than before, and berated George so earnestly and loudly, that it attracted the attention of Mr. Wilder, and caused him to leave his office to inquire into the cause.

“Mr. Butler,” said he, “I have noticed to-day that you have spoken repeatedly in a harsh manner to George, as if he was neglecting his business or committing a good many errors. What is the difficulty?”

"Well, sir," replied Mr. Butler, hesitatingly, "George is quite unlike himself to-day. He has made many errors and blots on his work, which ordinarily he is quite free from."

George could hear no more ; he had fortified himself to the utmost, but his nerves could bear nothing further. He burst into tears, and attempted to leave the counting-room.

"You may go to my room, George," said Mr. Wilder. Then to Mr. Butler, "I suppose you heard of George's misfortune this morning."

"Yes, sir, I heard something of it, but nothing direct."

"And yet, with all this sorrow on his mind, you refuse to lighten his labor by at least kind words ! I am surprised ; this has been a serious loss to him ; it would be to any one ; but his loss is aggravated, not by the pecuniary value of the missing articles, but from the fact that they were presented to him, and the donation was richly deserved. For my part, I feel deeply grieved for him, and am de-

terminated to take every measure in my power to secure the recovery of the property and apprehension of the thief, let it cost what it may. I regret to be obliged to speak to you in this manner, particularly to be forced to allude to it in his presence, but I could bear it no longer. I shall expect a different course in the future."

Mr. Butler addressed Mr. Wilder as he was leaving, and said, "I acknowledge, sir, that I was hasty, but I was anxious to have this particular work done neatly, and was perhaps too exacting under the circumstances. I will endeavor to be more thoughtful in future, but it makes me excessively nervous to have work done carelessly." As Mr. Wilder left, a malicious smile lighted up Mr. Butler's features, and remained long enough to exhibit sufficient venom to have ruined the boy, if possible; and we have no doubt he will try.

The next day, George was in a calmer frame of mind, and Mr. Butler, from motives of policy, more lenient. Mr. Barrett called in, and had an interview with Mr. Wilder on the

subject of the robbery, and they both expressed their determination to ferret out the affair. George wanted to go to the police office at once, and inquire what had been done, but was dissuaded, as they told him that the officer understood his business thoroughly, and would notify them as soon as he had anything to communicate. And they had not long to wait ; for on the fourth day, a note came to the store, requesting George to call at the office at once, which he did, accompanied again by Mr. Wilder. On seeing his visitors, the detective put on his coat and hat, and they all proceeded to the shop of a pawnbroker, and entering, the officer asked to see the watch he had been talking about that morning. This was produced, and George involuntarily screamed out, —

“ O, it's mine ! it *is* mine ; ” and wanted to take it at once.

“ Don't be in a hurry, my friend,” said the officer ; “ you've got all *you* want, perhaps, but I haven't.” Then handing the watch and chain back to the Jew, he beckoned them out.

"But I want my *watch*," said George, on reaching the street.

"You shall have it in good time ; but I want the *thief*."

"And do you think you shall be able to secure him ?" asked Mr. Wilder.

"Without doubt. It appears that he has pawned it in this shop, and received an advance on it and the chain, saying that he wanted the money for only a day or two, and promising to call in to-morrow and redeem it. He is to call at eleven ; I shall arrest him, and you will then have the gratification of seeing him behind the grates."

"O, that would be no gratification to me," said George. "If I can only get my property, and Mrs. Rice get hers, I am sure I shall not want to have him punished, and I don't believe *she* will."

"Ah!" said the detective, "if we were all as tender-hearted as you are, youngster, what would become of justice?"

Mr. Wilder smiled, as he said, "If the thieves were not punished, George, it would be offering a premium for crime."

In the afternoon of the next day, the officer came in, and told them that if they wanted to, they could go to the station-house and see the thief, as he had just locked him up.

“Who is he? what’s his name?”

“I don’t know,” said the detective; “it is on our books at the station as he *gave* it, but I take but little notice of the names we get from such chaps. They don’t hold to their mothers’ names long after they commence to nab things.”

They entered the station, and were conducted through a hall down into the basement, which was dimly lighted; they passed by a row of cells all unoccupied, until the officer halted in front of one, and as soon as they could see distinctly (for coming from the sunlight into the dark room it was some little time before objects could readily be distinguished), George gasped out, “O! Robert Ashley!” and then could say no more.

He had never entertained a high opinion of Robert’s morality, but the thought had never entered his mind that he was a thief.

"Well, young man, you're caged at last," said the detective to Robert. "You got off so easy before, you thought you'd try it once more, did you?" Then turning to Mr. Wilder, the officer said, "He and two others were arrested a little less than a year ago, for complicity in breaking and entering a store, but it could not be proved against him, and he was discharged, and the other two are in the House of Correction, serving out their sentences. Well, he will be brought before the court to-morrow, and you two will be wanted to appear against him."

"What are you trembling so for, and looking so sad," inquired the officer of George. "You're not sorry you've found your property, are you? or is this place disagreeable to you? I presume you rarely visit station-houses."

"I am sorry to find in this young man one of my fellow-boarders," replied George, "and he was for some time my room-mate. I hope, sir, you will not do anything to him; I am sure I forgive him. He won't do so again, will you, Robert?"

Robert had all this time preserved an appearance of stoicism, and simply stared at his visitors with an impertinent gaze ; but when George spoke so kindly, it broke his spirit. He could bear ill usage, but sympathy and forgiveness never. He turned his eyes full on George's face, and replied, "George, can you, will you forgive me ? I needed the money, and I didn't know what else to do. I was going to get your watch back to you. I am, indeed, very sorry. Will you forgive me ?"

"Yes, Robert, I do freely ; and will do what I can for you."

The officer then told them, aside, that Robert would have to be brought before the court ; then, if they chose to bring any influence, it could be exerted in his behalf. He continued : "He has promised to tell me all about the balance of the property ; and if he does, and it is recovered, it will be all in his favor."

Mr. Wilder had not noticed the boy sufficiently to identify him as the one who brought the message to his store at the time George

was hurt, but when he did recognize him, he was not so surprised as George had been, for his countenance had struck him then, as indicating capabilities to do almost anything bad, and he was very happy to know that George had changed his room, and been so much rid of his company.

They left the station-house, promising to be at the court at ten o'clock the next day, and the officer remained to get from Robert what additional information he could on the subject of the silver ware.

"Can't we save him from punishment, Mr. Wilder?"

"I presume we could influence the case somewhat, if it were proper to do so; but is it?"

"O, yes, sir; he is not a bad boy at heart; and his father, a master of a vessel, is at sea now, and he has not had a good mother's counsel as I have; he lost his mother, when he was quite young."

"Well; George, I like your forgiving spirit; but if criminals were all pardoned, we should

none of us be safe ; and property and life would be valueless. Still I am disposed in all cases to temper justice with mercy, provided there is hope for reformation ; but I rather think, when you have had as long an experience as I have, you will have outgrown a part of your — what shall I call it ? Chicken-heartedness ? ” said he, smiling. “ Well, I won’t annoy you any more. Seriously speaking, I don’t wonder that you are interested for the boy ; it is natural to have a regard for those with whom we have labored for good and tried to improve, and I believe you have tried to benefit Robert, have you not ? ”

“ I tried to do my duty, sir ; but he opposed my efforts so strongly that I was obliged to relinquish them.”

“ Well,” said Mr. Wilder, as they were now entering the store, “ we will go to the court to-morrow, and see what can be done.”

The little family at Mrs. Rice’s, were astonished at the intelligence brought, when George went home to tea, for the absence from dinner of Robert had created no remark, as fre-

quently his business detained him, and in such cases, he took his dinner at a restaurant. The affair formed the general topic of conversation, for it is true that not one of the whole household had the least suspicion of Robert. Mrs. Rice was delighted in the hope of recovering her silver ware, and as for George, if he could have known that Robert would escape punishment, he would have been perfectly satisfied ; kind-hearted boy that he was. As it was, after his return from the Commercial College, and he took his light to go to bed, it was not to sleep ; and it was past midnight before he secured the rest his nervous system so much needed. He slept at last, but it was to dream of jails and station-houses. Once he saw Robert on trial, and heard him make a heart-breaking appeal for mercy ; this started him, and he awoke in a profuse perspiration. After such a night, it is no wonder that he arose little refreshed ; and his condition was not improved as he reflected on the trying scenes he would be obliged to pass through that day.



CHAPTER IX.

THE TRIAL.



AT ten o'clock, (the hour for opening the court), there were present a large number of persons ; some as witnesses to testify for or against some poor criminal ; others had come prepared to pay the fines and costs the judge might impose on their unfortunate friends ; others to volunteer as bondsmen, and by their aid purchase a little more freedom for their unlucky companions until they should have a trial at some future time ; while there were many more, who came simply as spectators, having nowhere else to go.

The court-room was crowded ; and it was with difficulty that the party interested in the

larceny from Mrs. Rice's boarding-house, could procure seats. Presently the judge entered, solemn and dignified. George looked at him earnestly. His appearance did not betoken much of mercy, however much of justice there might be in his heart. The crier, in a monotonous tone, announced the court open for business, and the clerk took a huge pile of complaints from a tin case before him, and in a rapid, almost inarticulate tone, called out the names of parties arrested for minor offences. One after another was called for drunkenness, as follows: To the prisoner: "You are complained of for getting drunk; are you guilty or not guilty?" "Guilty." "The court orders you to pay a fine of three dollars and costs, and stand committed to the House of Industry till paid." There were several of such cases, and at last there were brought in men, women, and children, charged with various other offences, such as assault and battery, vagrancy, violations of sundry city ordinances, &c. These were examined,

and acquitted or convicted, as the facts developed innocence or guilt.

All this occupied considerable time, and was very tedious to George, to whom the scenes were anything but agreeable, and Robert's position quite as much a cause of anxiety to the former, as to the latter ; and sometimes he would feel as if he hoped Robert had escaped (provided he could get his watch and chain, and Mrs. Rice her property) ; then the thought of what Mr. Wilder had said about justice came into his mind, and he knew it must be wrong to feel so, yet he could not exactly see *how* : but at last the time came.

"Robert Ashley, you are charged with the larceny of a watch and chain valued at two hundred dollars, property of one George Hutchins, and sundry pieces of silver ware, value unknown, the property of one Mary Rice, from the house of the latter. Are you guilty or not guilty?"

"Guilty," replied Robert, without lifting his eyes ; and he looked the picture of despair, his face unwashed, his hair uncombed, his linen

soiled, and altogether presented such an appearance of misery that George was well nigh unmanned before a word was spoken.

"What are the circumstances of this case," asked the judge. "Let the witnesses be called, if there are any; if not, let me see the officer."

"Witnesses in this case come forward and be sworn, called the clerk: Hutchins, Rice, and others; also the officer." The officer, as he advanced, had George's watch and chain in one hand, and, to Mrs. Rice's delight, the package of silver in the other. These he laid down in full view of the court and the witnesses, and took his position with the others to take the oath.

They all stood, raised their right hands, and swore that by the help of God they would tell "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth."

"George Hutchins, take the stand, and tell what you know about this case," said the judge.

It was George's first appearance in a court-

room, and his manner was at first nervous ; but as he progressed in his simple recital, he recovered his composure, his frank open manner returned, and no one would have doubted his story, even if no obligation to truthfulness had been imposed. He identified the watch and chain as his ; and, in concluding his narrative, volunteered, in his peculiarly winning, almost child-like way, a word of intercession for the unhappy lad, but was checked by the judge, who informed him that the time had not then arrived for defence or palliation, his first object being to ascertain facts and particulars ; afterwards he could be heard in mitigation, if he desired.

Mrs. Rice testified that Robert Ashley had been brought, about eleven months before, by his father, now absent at sea, to her house for board ; that his father's story of the loneliness of his son's condition, he being motherless, and his desire that he might be surrounded as much as possible by home influences, touched her heart ; and although Robert had been represented as a very mischievous boy, she finally

consented to accommodate him until his father's return ; that although Robert had fully corroborated his father's statement of his mischievousness, she had never suspected him of crime, and was very much astonished when forced to believe it of him. She informed the judge that she had placed the silver ware the night previous to the discovery of the robbery, in its usual depository in a tin box, — always making two packages, one of solid silver, such as was taken, and the other plated ware. On the morning George missed his watch, he came down very early to inform the people of his loss, and inquired if anything had been missed by others ; this led her to make an examination of her valuables, when she found the box had been opened, and one of the bundles abstracted, the more valuable one. She was asked if she recognized the property before her, as her own ; and examining it carefully, counting the pieces, she replied that it was all hers, and that nothing was missing. Having stated all that she knew, she was allowed to leave the stand.

Mr. Barrett was next called, and swore to the watch and chain as being the same he had presented some time before to George Hutchins, and Mr. Wilder, having been with him at the time of the purchase, confirmed his statement.

The detective was then examined, and testified as follows :—

“ I am a detective ; on the morning after the theft had been committed, I was directed to collect what information I could of the parties robbed, and endeavor to ferret out the whole matter. I went with Mr. Barrett and Mr. Hutchins to the store where the watch and chain were bought, and gathered all the particulars with regard to the property I desired ; then conceiving it might have been pawned, I visited several shops, and at last, two or three days after, found one where the proprietor acknowledged having made an advance on one answering my description ; he produced it, and this is the one here. I then ascertained from the broker that the person who brought it was a young man, who said he

wanted to raise a little money for a day or two, and was to call yesterday at eleven o'clock and redeem it. I secreted myself in the shop, and about the hour named, the boy Ashley came in, evidently prepared to pay his advance and interest, and recover the possession of the articles ; at this point I came forward, confronted him, and having sufficient evidence to warrant it, I arrested him and locked him up. In a conversation with him later, I told him he had better tell me where the silver was, as it would be to his interest ; and at last, after a good deal of hesitation, he acknowledged that he took it, and had left it with another broker at the south part of the city. I went there, and succeeded in obtaining this package before me."

The judge then inquired of the officer, if to his knowledge, the prisoner had ever been convicted of any crime before ; and was answered that he had been arrested once, but there being insufficient evidence, he had been discharged.

Then turning to the prisoner, the judge inquired if he had any witnesses.

Robert replied that he had sent to his employer to inform him that he was in trouble, and to request him to be present, but he did not see him.

"What do you expect to prove by him?" asked the judge.

"I only wanted him to testify to my good character during the time I have been in his employ," said Robert.

"Have you any other witnesses?"

Robert was just about to say "No," when the crowd jostled right and left, and a weather-beaten man hurried forward; and as soon as he came near enough, said, in a loud tone, "Yes, he has; *I am his father!*"

The effect of this sudden and unlooked-for appearance, was electrifying. The sailor was sworn, and allowed to speak for his boy, who, trembling, shamefaced, and almost crushed by his disgraceful position, stood looking first at one, and then at the other. His father proceeded:—

"I am the captain of the ship *Lion*, and arrived here from Hong Kong last night; this

morning I went to the store where I left my son employed, but found he had not been there since yesterday morning. No one seemed to know anything about him ; the proprietor, in whose special care I had placed him, was absent, having been called out of town on business. I at once went to Mrs. Rice's boarding-house to gain some information of him if possible, and was told of his arrest, — to my surprise and sorrow, — and that his trial would come off to-day. I hastened to be here in season, and have just arrived."

"Then, of course, you know nothing of the circumstances of the robbery," inquired the judge.

"Nothing whatever."

"Do I understand that you wish to speak in behalf of your son?"

"I do, indeed, sir," said the father. "Robert's mother died when he was four years of age, and his care during early childhood devolved on his aunt, his mother's sister ; she is now dead. As I said before, I am a master mariner, and am away from home a great

deal ; so Robert has been deprived of parental discipline almost ever since his mother's death. He has naturally a good disposition ; I never heard of his taking anything before ; he must have become acquainted with some very bad boys ; but God knows that I never expected to be obliged to stand up in a court of justice to speak in his behalf, and he a prisoner at the bar." [Here the parent could control his feelings no longer ; tears coursed their way down his bronzed cheeks, and the strong man, unused to weeping, was childlike in his grief.] Recovering himself in a degree, he continued : "I procured for him a situation in a wholesale dry goods house before I left, in March last, and he promised to be faithful and good ; but now, sir, what shall I do ? I don't believe that Robert is a hardened boy ; I will try and save him ; the property will be restored ; no one will be a loser by him ; but it will break my heart if he is sent to prison.

"I will suffer myself to be put under any bonds you may assign that I will take the boy on my next voyage, and until my vessel is

ready for sea the Court can have control over him. I hope your Honor will be generous enough to grant my request ; it is a sad position for *me*, and an awful one for *him*. I have already received a shock which it will take a long time to recover from ; but if he is sent to prison, it will crush me, and I fear ruin him. Do give me an opportunity to try and reform him, by taking him to sea." The father sat down, convulsed with emotion.

" *You* had a word to say to me early in the case, Mr. Hutchins," said the judge ; "you may now be heard."

George rose, and as composedly as he could, told the Court that he had been in the city since September last, all the time a boarder at Mrs. Rice's, and a part of the time a roommate with Robert Ashley ; and although he could not truthfully say that Robert was correct in all his habits, still he had never observed anything to indicate that he was addicted to stealing ; and he thought the boy must have been sorely tempted, or he would not have fallen this time ; that so far as he was per-

sonally concerned, he pitied Robert, and hoped the judge would exercise mercy in the case.

Mr. Wilder having an opportunity to say a word, hoped that if the court could consistently grant the prayer of the father of the youth, it would be done, as he had no hesitation in expressing his belief that it would be for the future good of the boy, as the disgrace attending a confinement in a prison would hang around him forever after his release, — which might occur during his father's absence, — and he, left without business, friends, or reputation, would be thrown, almost of necessity, into the society of those worse than himself, and through their influence, be ruined.

With this view, Mr. Wilder expressed the desire that if the judge could see any extenuating circumstances, he would exercise his prerogative, and save the boy.

Mr. Wilder further added that he was authorized by Mrs. Rice to express her disposition not only to be satisfied with such a course, but it was at her request, in part, that

he now strongly urged it. After citing a case which came under his own personal observation of a young man brought up for a first offence, (in which such clemency was exercised as was urged in the present case), and who was afterwards placed under favorable auspices, and is now a highly esteemed member of society, he submitted his argument, and took his seat. The judge then reviewed the case :—

“ There can be no doubt that a larceny has been committed at the place, and of the articles mentioned in the indictment, nor that the defendant is the guilty party. The question now to consider, is on the punishment.

“ The charge is a grave one, and merits a severe penalty, unless there be sufficiently strong mitigating circumstances to control it.

“ As a general principle, crime should be punished ; for the reason that if nothing hangs over the criminal to deter him, it is really offering a premium for its commission. Still, it is an object of punishment to reform the prisoner, as well as to deter others.

“There is no evidence to show that the prisoner has ever been convicted of any other offence, and the parties robbed have expressed personally, or by proxy, satisfaction. They desire, not only to drop the case, so far as they are concerned, but to act, if justice can be satisfied, for the good of the prisoner. I am disposed in all cases when I am satisfied beneficial results will accrue from lenient action, to make the penalty for crime such that it will be a *benefit* to the party, rather than of such a character as to *crush* the victim in his future prospects; and yet great caution should be used in judging between true penitence and the counterfeit.

“In the case before me, I think I may, under the circumstances, exercise some clemency. I shall, therefore, order the defendant to pay the costs of prosecution, and to be confined, under the care of the sheriff, in the county jail, until the parent is ready for sea; and shall order the defendant on probation; requiring bonds in the sum of five thousand

dollars for his good behavior ; the present complaint to be placed on file, to be brought up against the prisoner if he is ever arraigned before this court again for any offence." Then turning to Robert, he said, " You see now what it is to have friends to love you and plead for you. A reform on your part, will have the effect of proving to them your ability to become a worthy member of society ; while, if you take advantage of their kindness, and the indulgence which the Court now sees fit to exercise, you again sin, it will not only be an insult to the Court, which will be recognized in the meting out of future sentence, but weaken the confidence of every one in the professions of persons similarly situated in future.

" When your father is ready for sea, go with him, learn to be a sailor, abstain from vices that will lead you back again into sin, grow up to be a comfort to that father whose gray hairs must remind you that he will not always be spared to you, and know that it rests with you to say whether the

evening of his life shall be cheered or blasted by your conduct."

Robert was then conveyed from the court room, preparatory to his removal to jail. His father gratefully paid the costs, and the required bonds were given.



CHAPTER X.

THE JAIL.

IN George's return to the store, he found a letter awaiting him from Henry Clement, informing him that his father's affairs were assuming a more favorable appearance than they had feared they would at first. An arrangement had been made which would still enable them to retain possession of the house and farm, that his father had accepted an agency of an insurance company, that one of his sisters was intending to procure pupils to take lessons in music,—in fact had already four engaged,—while the other sister had an offer, which she was about to accept, of a position as governess in a family in an adjoining town; that sad and

humiliating as these reverses were, they had determined to accept the situation calmly, and if possibly, cheerfully ; and for himself, he was anxious to obtain a situation in some store in the city, and asked George if he could render him any assistance, closing his letter by saying, "but for the grace of God, I do not know what I might have done in this time of trouble ; but I place my trust in the Almighty arm, and am consoled by the consciousness that ' He doeth all things well.' "

George showed this letter to Mr. Wilder, and asked him if he knew of any place he could secure for Henry. His employer thought for a moment, and then said, "I don't know whether or not the vacancy created by Robert's trouble has yet been filled ; but I know the parties, and will at once call on them, and mention your young friend."

In a day or two, Mr. Wilder told George that he had had an interview with the proprietor of the store where Robert had been employed, and found that the vacancy still existed, but that they were anxious to have it

filled when they could secure the services of a *good* boy. They were pleased with the information he had given them of Henry's habits and general character, as known by George, and would like to see him ; and Mr. Wilder had told them that he would have the young man sent for.

George was very happy to have the opportunity to write such good tidings to Henry, and sat down at once to carry the promise into execution ; and the next Monday, brought Henry with valise in hand to Mr. Wilder's store. That gentleman, after a series of questions to ascertain for himself something of the lad's character, and being perfectly satisfied with his replies, accompanied him to the store, where he was at once accepted, and commenced his labors. Of course the young men were anxious to room together, and Robert's departure rendered it possible ; so Mrs. Rice made some changes in her domestic relations ; they were given a large front room, and George and Henry duly installed therein.

George, now thought, with reason, that these

were halcyon days, and two happier, better dispositioned young men could not be found. Henry joined Mr. Thomas's Bible class, and was as constant in his attendance there, and at the religious services of the church, as George had ever been. They were almost inseparable; wherever one was seen (out of business hours), it was certain the other was not far distant.

The close of the year, now approaching, was characterized by a remarkable degree of religious interest in the church the two young men attended. Many souls were converted, and there was a large acquisition of members. This state of things was particularly noticeable in the Sabbath school; in fact it had its beginning there. Meetings were held every evening, and George and Henry were earnestly engaged in the kind of labor in which they both delighted; pointing their young companions the way to God.

Having obtained the consent of their parents, and with the approbation of their Sabbath school teacher, they both joined the

church on the same Sabbath, having given good evidence of the hope within them. The feeling increased, and continued very deep through the entire winter, and the young men had reason to praise God that his blessing had attended their efforts for the good of the young people of their acquaintance.

Mrs. Hutchins had accepted an invitation from her brother to pass a few weeks with him and his family, and was present at church on the Sabbath her son was admitted to church-fellowship; and free from care and trouble, as her life had been for years, the Sabbath on which she witnessed George's public identification with the people of God, was the happiest she had ever spent on earth; and she so expressed herself on reaching home, saying, in the language of the Holy Book, with which she was so familiar, and apt quotations from which were often reverently made in her daily conversation, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation."

Her visit to Mr. Wood's house gave the

Barretts and Wilders frequent opportunities to see Mrs. Hutchins, which they improved, often riding out to call on her; while she, during her stay in the vicinity, made occasional calls in return; and these families, having such advantages for observation, would, in their frequent conversations on the subject, ask the question, "Which is the happier or more to be envied, the mother of such a son, or the son of such a mother?"

Mrs. Hutchins was very grateful to the kind friends of her son, for their liberality and good feeling, but she exercised her right, as their senior in years, to caution them against placing too high an estimate on him; not that she did not consider him entitled to all he had received of kind treatment, but that he might "not think more highly of himself than he ought to think;" (a self-estimation to which he was not naturally prone, but from which she desired him always to be free.)

The two families would have been glad to have induced her to remain with them all winter, but she was resolute in her determina-

tion to return home as soon as she had finished her visit at her brother's, and all their arguments proved fruitless ; and even Mary, who was at once received by Mrs. Hutchins as a pet, could only prevail on her to spend one short week with them ; but they made the most of that week ; and when she left, she extended an invitation to the Barretts and Wilders to visit her at her country residence the next summer, and Mary secured a promise from her father, that a portion of her August vacation, if she was able, should be passed with "Mother Hutchins."

During Robert's confinement at the jail, George had visited him several times, and on one occasion he went accompanied by Mrs. Rice.

Robert appeared deeply penitent, and grateful to his friends for their intercession in his behalf on the day of the trial. He had asked George's forgiveness over and over again, and George had repeatedly assured him that he had it, and that so far from feeling any ill-will towards him, his emotions were of the ten-

derest regard. On this occasion, Mrs. Rice was asked by him for *her* pardon, and she told him that she had never entertained any sentiment towards him but kindness, and that her principal desire in his case now, was to see him grow up to be a good man, and an honored member of society.

As she was about leaving, and might not have another interview, she took occasion to give him some good, motherly advice in a spirit of kindness, which was well received, and for which he thanked her. Taking his hand, she said,—

“Robert, you would have loved and tried to obey your mother, if she had been spared to you, would you not?”

“I would.”

“It might have changed the whole course of your life if she had lived, but it was for the best, no doubt, that you were so early in life deprived of her counsel and care. I am a mother. If I should give you some advice that I think will be good for you, will you endeavor to follow it?”

“I will.”

“I may be plain, but you will not be offended when you know I speak solely for your good. First then, Robert, leave off forever the use of intoxicating liquors ; this, I fear, was the direct cause of your fall ; next, avoid the society of all those whose habits you do not know to be good, whose words are impure or profane, or who visit low and disreputable haunts. I want you to occupy the time you would pass in their company, and in learning their ways, in improving your mind ; and to that end, I want you to promise me that you will read and study some books I have at home, and will send to you. During your expected absence from home you will have ample opportunity to do this ; and if you fully appreciate the benefits which are sure to result, I am satisfied you will never regret your promise to me. If your mother had lived, or your father’s business had detained him on the land, your facilities for this mental improvement, would have been much greater. I knew your dear mother well ; she was too

good for this wicked world, and her highest ambition seemed to be that you might grow up to be a good man. She often talked to me about you, when you were very young, and of her hopes for your future ; and she used to talk to me also, Robert, of her faith in God that you would be a Christian. I have not profited as I ought by her good example, but I am trying to do better ; and how much good we may both be able to do, if we try ! It is not too late now, particularly for you. You are yet young, and if you will see the importance of what I say, I know you will realize much good from following my directions, and I shall have no fears for your future. Now, will you promise me all I have asked ?”

“I will, Mrs. Rice ; I do, and thank you besides.”

“There are some other things of a religious nature, which I feel should be said, but George is here, and he can say them better than I can, and I need counsel on those matters quite as much as any one. I leave you with him ; I know he will do his duty

to you, and I beg you to take heed to everything he may say.

“Now, Robert, God bless you, at sea and at home; everywhere; now and forever; farewell.”

“Before you go, Mrs. Rice, *I* have a word to say,” remarked Robert. “I am now in confinement; it has given me time for thought, and I hope I am better for the punishment; it has been a lesson to me, at all events, so far as this: I have learned to feel that I deserved this imprisonment, and a severer punishment for my offence, and I am deeply grateful to you all for causing it to be so light; but it mortifies me to be seen here; yes, it wounds my heart to know that I have been bad enough to be sent here; and I want to say to you both, that as God hears me speak, and with His help, I will never do anything which would result in my being placed in prison again, so long as I live.”

Mrs. Rice could not reply, and Robert could have said but little more, audibly. The

"farewell" was imagined ; they wrung each other's hand, and Mrs. Rice left.

After her departure, George asked Robert if he remembered the conversations they had sometimes held in their little room at Mrs. Rice's on religious matters. He did.

"You thought, perhaps, that I was intruding, perhaps impertinent ; but, Robert, I meant it all for your good."

"I know you did, George ; and if I had only listened to you then, I should not be here now."

"Quite likely, Robert, but it is not too late now. May I ? are you willing I should say something more to you on the same subject to-day ?"

"Yes, George, I should like to hear you. I have had a good deal of time to think, since I have been here, and have had several conversations with the chaplain ; a good man he is, too ; but I think I should like to hear *you* talk, for I have known you longer, and noticed that you are not like some I have known, who call themselves Christians, who

pray on Sundays, and do not think of God through all the rest of the week. I have seen enough of you, to satisfy me that you are my friend."

"Yes, Robert, I am. I would do anything in my power, to see you a Christian; it is simple, — 'ask and ye shall receive;' when you feel that you have need of a Saviour, just ask for grace, and you will receive it, freely, fully, gloriously. O, Robert, as you will soon leave this place to go abroad, what can you take that will be of more value to you than a Saviour's love?"

"In all probability, as I am told, a week from to-day will find you on board of your father's ship, and it may be the last opportunity I shall ever have to urge you to make your peace with God. Life is uncertain; death calls all, young or old; you are liable to be wrecked. O, Robert, do not wilfully, thoughtlessly, postpone this great subject, and wreck your soul. I beg, I implore you to give your heart to God now."

Robert was deeply affected. George asked

him if he would allow him to pray with him. They rose together, and knelt beside his cot, while George besought his heavenly Father to accept the sinner, who he felt was penitent ; if he was not sufficiently so, to soften his heart ; but of all else, to prevent by His grace that the youth should leave that place, or secure his freedom, until he could believe that "if the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed." They rose : George took from his pocket a Bible, and pointing to the fly-leaf, Robert read,—"From George Hutchins to Robert Ashley : may God bless the reading of this book."

George had now exhausted all the time which had been granted him to be absent, so he rose to go, saying, "Robert, I will try to see you again to-morrow ; please think of what has been said, pray for yourself, and when I see you again, tell me that you have made up your mind to be a Christian."

He had just left the jail, and was passing rapidly through the street, when he saw Mary Barrett on her way home ; and as his

route to the store led directly past her father's house, he slackened his pace somewhat, that he might accompany her. She asked him where he had been, and he gave her a partial account of his interview with Robert at the jail, how humble and sorry he was for his offence, and expressed to her his hope that Robert would grow up to be a good man.

She evinced a good deal of interest in him, and when she heard that he was going to sea so soon, and of Mrs. Rice's offer of books, she announced her determination to ask her father to provide some also, for Robert to read during the voyage. This, George very much approved of, and she said she should speak to her father about it, that very night.

"So, do," said George; "Robert will be so happy. I shall see him, probably, to-morrow afternoon, and I shan't say anything to him about it, but I am sure it will please him."

That night George and Henry went to a young people's prayer meeting, and the occurrences at the jail were related, and the prayers of the meeting requested for the poor

young prisoner. One and another led his case to the throne of grace ; and when the meeting was over, and they were returning home, George remarked that he had a feeling within him that he could not account for or explain, but it was impressed on his mind that the prayers of that evening would be answered, adding, " Henry, I feel confident that Robert will be a Christian before he leaves that jail." This confidence, however, did not deter them both from again pleading his cause in their own devotions at home ; and after he had retired, almost his last conscious breath was a prayer, " O God, grant my petition, accept him, send down thy blessing."

The next forenoon, Mr. Barrett called in at the store, and said to George, " Mary is a little teaser ; she would give me no peace, until I had promised to purchase some books for the young lad who took such a liking to your watch. So I had to please her ; and if you can be spared to go out with me, we will look in at some bookstores, and you may assist me in making a selection."

George sought Mr. Wilder's presence, and told him that he had been away the day before, by permission, to the jail, to see Robert, and had promised him, (conditional on Mr. Wilder's consent), to go again that afternoon. He told him that he had found Robert in a state of mind at once surprising and delightful to him, and he felt in his heart, from what he had heard and seen, that Robert was not far from the kingdom of God ; that under the circumstances, as business was dull, if there was no objection, he would like to go again in the afternoon ; and added, that Mr. Barrett was now waiting permission for him to go and assist in the selection of some books that that gentleman was proposing to purchase, as a parting present for Robert ; that he knew he had no claim on his employer's generosity in the use of any more of his time, but if he was perfectly willing, he would like to.

Mr. Wilder smiled, and replied, "Well, go, and do all the good you can."

Mr. Barrett and George passed through several streets and entered many stores

before they found anything to exactly suit them. At last, in one place, they found a box, or library, containing twenty volumes of selected religious works, which they both thought were just the thing, and Mr. Barrett ordered them sent to his house, to be forwarded to Robert, as soon as he should have joined the ship.

George's impressions of the night before, with regard to Robert's spiritual condition, had not been removed from his mind ; and when he was on his way to the jail, in the afternoon, he was all the way repeating, silently, the prayer of the night before.

He passed by the row of empty cells, and had just turned into the corridor where Robert was, when he heard voices, and on reaching Robert's apartment, he saw a gentleman who was introduced as the chaplain, who, looking up at George, said, " Here is blessed news ; our young friend has found the ' pearl of great price.' "

" Yes, George," said Robert, " I have found the Saviour."

There was a scene in that room that afternoon, at which angels rejoiced.

Robert, on George's departure the day before, had wrestled with God, and begged for mercy, till at last light broke in on his soul, and he felt himself a child of God. They passed a delightful afternoon together. How Robert blessed God for even the circumstances which led him to that place of confinement, where his spirit was liberated. His cell was no longer the dark, dismal place it had been, and his countenance was bright with joy, and indicative of the peace that reigned within.



CHAPTER XI.

OFF FOR CHINA.



AT last the ship *Lion* was ready for sea, and among those who were looking on, observing the preparations for the long voyage, were some unaccustomed to such scenes ; some, in fact, who had never, in all their lives, seen a vessel “ get under weigh.” To others, the scene was no novelty, (and for precisely this reason), they were rarely seen on the wharves on such occasions.

Early that morning, Mr. Barrett had sent the library to the ship, with a note directed to Robert Ashley ; and now he, with his family, Mr. and Mrs. Wilder, one or two of the boarders at Mrs. Rice’s, and George Hutchins,

were on the dock, waiting the arrival of Captain Ashley and his son, who were expected every moment. One of the mates invited the party on board; an invitation which they accepted, and that officer took them over the vessel, showing them everything in which he thought they might be interested.

Presently a carriage approached, and the father and son stepped on board. Captain Ashley was introduced to such of the company as he had never met, and all pressed forward to grasp Robert's hand. He looked well in his new jaunty sailor's suit, which had just been purchased as a part of his outfit, and which so altered his appearance, as to render him almost unrecognizable. His countenance beamed with pleasant anticipations, and indicated the happiness resulting from peace with God.

As soon as he recognized Robert, George stepped forward, and was the first to salute him. The captain invited them into the cabin, and they all went, Robert as anxious as any, for he had not been on board since

the ship was in port before, nearly a year ago. As they passed into the cabin, some one asked where Robert's quarters were, and they were shown into a comfortable state-room, commodious and neat. Robert looked in also, and saw with surprise the library set up and open, with the note accompanying.

"O, George, this is more of your work," said he, taking up the letter.

"No, Robert, you are mistaken there; you are indebted to Mr. Barrett for that," said George.

"Another error," said Mr. Barrett. "This young lady (pointing to Mary) originated the idea, Robert, thinking that sometimes your time might hang heavily, and a good book to take up now and then, would be agreeable; while George assisted me in the selection. I had rather you would not open the letter *now*; it contains little of immediate importance," said he, as he saw Robert about to break the seal. "I should prefer to have you read it after you have left."

"Well," said Robert, "I am very much

obliged to you all, and wish to say that everything through which I have passed, has, I trust, been overruled for my good ; I believe my sins have been forgiven, and am determined that my life, so poorly begun, shall be continued, as long as I am permitted to enjoy it, in the service of my Master."

"I am glad to hear this," said Mr. Wilder, "and you have my prayers, and the prayers of all of us, for your prosperity."

Then turning to George, Robert began to say something of the debt of gratitude he owed him for the interest manifested by him, but George made a signal for him to cease, saying, —

"All the praise belongs to God."

During all this time Robert preserved a modest, and at times, a bashful demeanor, pleasantly in contrast to his former bold, defiant style.

"Captain Ashley," said Mr. Barrett, "I hope you will have a prosperous and pleasant voyage, and return safely, with all your ship's company, in health ; and that we may all live

to see each other again. The Captain replied, —

“I am outside but a rough sailor, but I have a heart capable of being touched by kindness. I have seen during my stay at home, this voyage, more of Christian benevolence than ever before in my life. I have seen religion carried into every-day life; and but for you, my friends, where would my son have been to-day? I assure you, your generosity has touched my heart, and led me to think of myself and my lost condition, and now, as I shall be compelled to wait for an hour or so more for the pilot, I would like, as a favor, which I assure you I shall always remember, to have a prayer made in my cabin. I have commanded this ship eleven years, and, to my knowledge, a prayer was never made on board. Dedicate her, and the ship's company to the service of God, and, with divine assistance, I will endeavor to do my duty.”

They knelt; Mr. Wilder led them to the throne of grace, followed by Mr. Barrett, and then George was called on by the captain; all

praying for the safety of the vessel and those on board, but more particularly for the salvation of him who made the request, that he might be brought to the foot of the Cross; and also for the recent convert, that he might be kept from temptation, honor the cause of his Master, and be the means of doing great good.

When they rose, Mr. Wilder, in a clear voice, commenced singing a hymn, in which he was joined by all present, the ladies included, and at the unusual sound of which, the men on board stopped their work to listen, as the sweet chords were heard from the cabin.

“Jesus, refuge of my soul,
Let me to thy bosom fly,
While the raging billows roll,
While the tempest still is nigh;
Hide me, O, my Saviour, hide,
Till the storm of life is past;
Safe into the haven guide;
O, receive my soul at last.”

A few words in private, closed this conference. They shook hands, tears, manly tears,

were shed, and they separated, some to remain and labor in the Lord's vineyard at home, while the others would soon be on their way to a far distant port.

The letter which Robert was requested to allow to remain sealed till his departure, was opened as soon as the tug-boat had started the ship from the wharf, so impatient was he to know its contents. It read as follows : —

BOSTON, February 13, 18—.

“MY DEAR YOUNG FRIEND : In presenting, in behalf of my daughter, the accompanying collection of books, which may serve to while away many a weary hour, and which, with God's blessing, will be a benefit as well as an amusement to you, I desire to add a word of counsel, which you will not feel too personal, for I am actuated by the best of motives. If it prove beneficial, I shall be well paid.

“I am unable to express my happiness, that the efforts of your many friends were sufficient to secure the influence of the Court, and that your punishment was so slight, in view of the magnitude of the offence.

“You no doubt feel, as you have good reason to, very grateful to George Hutchins, who in this affair only manifested a magnanimity observed by his friends before, and who exhibited a spirit of Christian forgiveness, both rare, and worthy of example. Others have also interested themselves in your welfare; and their action in your behalf will ever be remembered gratefully by you.

“All your friends unite with me in the feeling that you are now truly repentant, and in the hope that your future will be brighter in consequence of this sea of trouble through which you have passed.

“Most heartily do I thank God, that in addition to your renunciation of many habits which probably led to your calamities, you have given your heart to God, and dedicated your life to his service. You may be said now to have just commenced to live, and if this change has been a thorough one (which we all have confidence to believe is true), you have before you a great work to do. You are young, and it may be that God intends to give you

many years in which to labor for him. There are thousands of persons, old and young, whom you will be obliged to meet and associate with, who have no hope and are without God in the world. A word fitly spoken by you, may be the means, under God, of changing the whole tenor of their lives. Omit, then, no opportunity to do good. Let your daily life be such as to bring no stain upon the holy cause you have espoused. Guard well your words, thoughts, and acts, that they may be pure; pure for your own sake, pure for the sake of others who may be watching your example, and pure because the cause is pure, made so by the blood of the Lamb.

“ You have my prayers that you may be the instrument in God’s hand of leading souls to Christ, and in praying, hoping, and expecting this much of you, I am not ignorant that you will have to be very, very watchful that you do not fall into your old habits. I do not say this *expecting* that you will, but Satan is artful, and many devices will be brought into play, to draw you from the cross. I have, therefore,

devoted more time to this particular point, than any other.

“Be watchful over yourself; live near the cross, and all will be well. Do not neglect prayer, and regular, systematic study of God’s word. Learn all you can of the plan of salvation, that you may point the way to others.

“Be diligent in temporal matters. Learn all you can of seamanship while you are gone, so that if it be God’s will that you should succeed your father in his profession, you may be the sooner prepared for it. As soon as you return, if I am living, I want to see you, and you have no better well-wisher for your temporal and spiritual prosperity than the writer.

“I trust your voyage will be a short, profitable, and pleasant one, and that you, and all with whom you are connected, may sail safely on the whole voyage of life, and finally cast anchor in the port of heaven.

“I am, your well wisher,

“HORACE BARRETT.

“TO ROBERT ASHLEY, on board ship Lion.”

Robert feeling it a duty to send some reply to his benefactor, sat down and penned the following, which he sent back by the pilot:—

“ON BOARD SHIP LION,
BOSTON HARBOR, Feb. 16, 18—.

“MR. HORACE BARRETT.

“MY DEAR SIR: I am very much obliged for the nice present your daughter was so thoughtful as to suggest to you, and also grateful to yourself and others for making so good a selection, and I am no less thankful for the good advice you have given me, and shall try and live up to it. I shall pray not to be led back to sin, and shall never forget, while I live, the kind friends, who, while taking care of my poor body, did not neglect my soul.

“I thank you all. May God be merciful to me, and make me a good man.

“Yours, truly,

“ROBERT ASHLEY.”

Everything continued to move on in regularity at the store, and it was now more than a year since George first entered the service of

Messrs. Wilder & Clark. His talent for business was unmistakably good, and as the entire time of two was not required in the counting-room, George had acquired quite an enviable reputation as a salesman; in fact his whole demeanor was highly satisfactory to his employer. Mr. Butler remained the same attentive, always present book-keeper, and was generally, in pretty good temper, but occasionally, his old attacks of irascibility would return, quite as vehement, and to George's mind, quite as inexplicable, only they took a different course. He would, at such times, (instead of keeping George employed, and finding fault with all he did), send him out of the store on some frivolous errand, ostensibly on business, but really, as George often suspected, solely to be rid of his presence.

In all these periodical attacks, George preserved the same quiet, placid manner, so peculiarly his own, and no hasty reply was made, or the slightest approach to irritability observed in his manner, under the most trying circumstances.

Mr. Clark, the junior partner, (and the one having charge of the New York branch), came to Boston about once in two or three months, and usually remained in town but a day or two ; but he had observed George, and liked his appearance, and the attention he paid to business. Mr. Clark had frequently alluded to this in his conversations with Mr. Wilder, and at first jocosely, but subsequently with more seriousness, expressed his desire to take the young man to New York with him. To this Mr. Wilder had always objected ; but about this time, Mr. Clark, being in Boston, told his partner one day, that he needed in New York, just such a young man as George, and quite earnestly pressed his claim for his services. To be sure, if George did go, he would be still in their employ, but Mr. Wilder was a little selfish ; yet not wishing to appear so to his partner, he proposed to mention the subject to George, and they would abide his decision.

Accordingly, he was called into Mr. Wilder's room, and the case stated ; to which George replied, —

“I am very glad to have done so well that Mr. Clark is willing to trust me, but if the matter is left to me, I shall prefer to remain in Boston. I am attached to many kind friends whose acquaintance I have formed since coming here, and besides this, I shall be nearer to mother if I stay.”

This reply pleased Mr. Wilder, although no outward indication of gratification of the one, or disappointment of the other, was apparent, and Mr. Clark was obliged to yield.



CHAPTER XII.

ILLNESS AND RECOVERY.

ONE morning, Mr. Butler came into the store, complaining of feeling ill. He had caught a severe cold by having worn thinner apparel than customary, and was suffering from a severe pain in his head, which increasing in intensity, he was obliged to adopt Mr. Wilder's advice to go home, although at first he positively refused to absent himself from his desk a single hour.

He boarded at some distance from the store, in the south part of the city, and was so much worse on reaching his home that a physician was at once called, who decided that he had strong indications of fever, which he would try and

drive off. But the next day at his call, so rapidly had the malady advanced he was found raving with brain disease. He was a strong, robust young man, of full habit ; had never been sick a day in his life, and the doctor wisely conjectured, that from these facts, his would be a very severe illness ; and so it proved to be. George called the next day to see him, at Mr. Wilder's request, and found that, with the exception of one distant male relative (a fellow-boarder), Mr. Butler had not a friend to call on with any freedom, in his hour of necessity ; so he volunteered his services, whenever they might be required, to watch with the sick man. These were soon needed, and for some time, he was by the afflicted man's bedside two evenings of every week, as a watcher.

Mr. Butler's reason, which forsook him early in his illness, was long in returning, and at times he was a raving maniac ; but he was so weak that he could do no damage to himself, or others. His mind, during these paroxysms, whenever George was present, seemed to

dwell on business ; in fact, all his conversation was on that subject. In imagination, he would be employed in balancing his books, or a trial sheet was to be taken off. Again, he was in the midst of stock taking ; then puzzling over some complicated account, which would not square as he desired and expected. New faces would appear to him, and he would conduct a loud and excited conversation with some imaginary customer, who appeared to be objecting to his account as stated on the books of Wilder & Clark. This peculiar feature was more frequent in his mind than any other, and his manner at such times was so wild and excited, that George was alarmed, particularly as when their eyes met, the book-keeper would call his name, accompanying it with epithets and expletives expressive of his detestation, and fear that George would discover and disclose some secret which appeared to weigh heavily on his mind. And what was very singular, whenever these turns of his delirium occurred, George and he were alone ; and from the fact that none of the other

watchers ever alluded to it, George inferred that it was his presence that led Mr. Butler into this peculiar train of thought. George was so impressed with what he heard, that he was frequently determined to inform Mr. Wilder. But on reflection, he concluded that it was only the working of the disease, and that Mr. Butler's application to business had been so incessant and regular, that there was really nothing strange about it; while he was so inexperienced in the care of the sick, that he presumed, after all, that there was nothing in Mr. Butler's conversation and wanderings of mind that might not have occurred in the case of any one, similarly affected.

Through skilful treatment on the part of the physician, and the constant and excellent attention rendered by his friends, Mr. Butler gradually rallied, but it was a long time before he was able to leave his room.

Mr. Wilder had called often during his book-keeper's illness; and now he was convalescent, he visited him almost daily, and as soon as he was able to leave his house, Mr.

Wilder's carriage was placed at his disposal, whenever the weather was favorable for a ride. Frequently, George would accompany him on these excursions, which were prolonged from day to day, as the invalid's strength warranted.

One pleasant day, as they were riding, Mr. Butler's conversation turned on his recent illness, and he asked George if Mr. Wilder had said anything to him, while he was sick, about business, or the books. George said,—

“No.”

“Has he said anything about me at *all*?”

“No, only asking every day about your health, and expressing pleasure at your improved condition,” said George.

“Well, when I was sickest, I was crazy, was I not?”

“Yes, I think you was.”

“Did I say anything myself, about business?”

“O, yes ; you seemed to be working as hard as if you had been at your desk.”

“Did I appear to be engaged in any particular *branch* of the business? or was there

any *one* thing connected with the business which seemed to engross my mind more than another ? ”

“ You appeared to be settling some accounts, and was excited and annoyed that you were unable to do it right.”

“ Was Mr. Wilder present on such occasions ? ”

“ No, he was never there during any of those times ; in fact, I understand he did not see you at all, while your mind was disturbed ; and, although he called almost every day, he would not go up to see you, as he said he could do no good, and it was best to keep you as quiet as possible.”

“ Well, I shall be able to go to the store in a few days, and then I shall feel easy ; but I have been very sick, George, and my attention to business has been so close for so many years, that there is nothing very strange in my dwelling on it in my sickness, is there ? ”

“ No, on the whole, I do not think there is ; on the contrary, perhaps, it is quite usual for persons similarly affected, to think while sick,

of what was on their minds most, while in health."

This reply did not appear to quite satisfy Mr. Butler, for he added, —

"You never heard during all my sickness anything that would give you a bad impression of me, either from my own lips when delirious, or from any one else?"

George could say with truth that he had not, and the subject was dropped; but, so far as *he* was concerned, it was not forgotten. He could now recall, with terrible distinctness, some expressions of Mr. Butler's about the books, and of imprecation on that "young saint," (as during his illness he had called George more frequently than by his name), and he feared that there was something wrong after all. And yet there had been nothing said in his sickness, or since he began to recover, to convince him that such was the case; and he was forced to fall back on his old theory, that after all the disease had created the phantom. Still less was he certain enough to justify him in alluding to it to Mr. Wilder,

although if he had known positively that there had been anything wrong in the book-keeper's course, his sense of duty would have led him to do so, no matter what might have been the result.

Mr. Butler was soon able to go to the store, and ere long was seen at his desk, with his accustomed regularity and application. He, however, came too soon ; his physician warned him, his friends at his boarding-house remonstrated, Mr. Wilder suggested that he was not strong enough to resume labor, but he was not to be advised. He tried the experiment, and a relapse was the result. It did not appear in the same form as before, but his strength failed him, and he was thought to be rapidly declining ; but here again his naturally strong constitution prevailed, and he eventually became better, after many weeks of confinement to his house.



CHAPTER XIII.

MORE CRIME DISCOVERED.

WHILE Mr. Butler was sick, George was employed in making out the annual accounts, and mailing them to their customers abroad. Among these accounts was one forwarded to a western firm, Messrs. Swift & Brooks, who wrote back that there was a material discrepancy between their accounts, but that one of the partners would be in Boston in a few weeks, and would call at the store, prepared to compare statements.

Mr. Butler had recovered, and was at his desk, one morning, writing. George was entering a recent sale on the book, and Mr. Wilder was looking over his "Notes Receivable" book to see how much there would be

forthcoming the ensuing month, when a gentleman entered.

“Good morning, Mr. Brooks ; how do you do, sir ?”

“How do you do, Mr. Wilder.”

A general conversation was indulged in for a few moments, when the stranger remarked, —

“I received your statement of our indebtedness a short time since, but it does not agree with our books. I guess this time Wilder & Clark have made an error.” [He smiled when he said this.] As he advanced with his documents in his hand, Mr. Wilder introduced him to Mr. Butler. They had never met before, as Mr. Brooks’s partner, Mr. Swift, had transacted the business in Boston during Mr. Butler’s connection with the books of Mr. Wilder.

When Mr. Butler heard the name, he turned suddenly pale and almost fainted, attracting the attention of all present.

“Are you sick, Mr. Butler ?” inquired Mr. Wilder.

“N—no, sir, only a little faint,” almost

gasped the book-keeper. A glass of water seemed to revive him, and the examination of the account commenced, Mr. Wilder taking his ledger, and the customer his memoranda, while Mr. Butler looked vacantly on.

"We'll take our charges first," said Mr. Wilder, and began to call off, while Mr. Brooks checked. They found the purchases, as charged, to correspond exactly with the bills of his goods which Mr. Brooks held in his hand, ready to produce, should an error be discovered in that column.

"Now for your credits, Mr. Brooks," said Mr. Wilder ; then added, with a smile, " I guess you'll find we know how to keep books after all. My credits read down as follows : I will call while you check on your papers. No matter about dates ; let's take only the amounts.

" Note six months, \$879.52."

" Right."

" Sight draft, \$1239.75."

" Right."

" Cash, \$1200."

" Right."

"Note six months, \$787.50."

"Right."

"Note nine months, \$900."

"Right ; but you have skipped something."

"No, I haven't ; you must be wrong. I will call again," and he repeated just as before, Mr. Brooks checking once more, so as to prevent error, until he came to the nine months' note for \$900.

"Now, Mr. Wilder, you have failed to give me credit for \$1250 cash on the 3d of July."

"We didn't receive it," said Mr. Wilder, and he pulled down his cash book, turned hastily to the date mentioned, and pointed triumphantly to the day in question, as well as to several days previous and subsequent to July 3d. "There," said he exultingly, "didn't I tell you we didn't receive it ?"

"I can't help what your cash book says," replied Mr. Brooks ; "I have your receipt, and here it is," saying which, he took from his pocket a file of letters, and running them over, produced one, indorsed "Wilder & Clark, July 3, 18—."

Mr. Wilder started; George had never seen him so excited before. "How's this? Where's Mr. Butler?" George said,—

"He just stepped out a moment ago, while you were engaged with that gentleman. I presume he is not far off, I will look for him," at the same time put on his hat and started in search.

"Let me see that receipt and letter again," said Mr. Wilder.

It was shown him, and read as follows:—

"\$1250.

Boston, July 3, 18—.

"Received of Messrs. Swift & Brooks, cash draft, payable to our own order, on Messrs. ——— & Co., Boston, for twelve hundred and fifty dollars.

"WILDER & CLARK,

"by C. BUTLER."

Mr. Wilder opened the letter, and read slowly:—

"BOSTON, July 3, 18—.

"GENTLEMEN: Your communication, enclosing sight draft for (\$1250) twelve hundred

and fifty dollars, was this day received, and is passed to your credit. We were sorry not to have received an order for goods by same mail, but shall expect to hear from you ere long.

"Our Mr. Wilder is now in New York ; expected home day after to-morrow.

"We remain yours truly,

"WILDER & CLARK,

"by C. BUTLER.

"To Messrs. SWIFT & BROOKS."

George had been gone about fifteen minutes, when he returned, saying that he had been everywhere he could think Mr. Butler was in the habit of going, but without finding him.

Mr. Wilder saw criminality in the conduct of his book-keeper, but kept his suspicions to himself.

"Take a carriage, George, and drive to his house, and if at home, request him to come here at once. Go as expeditiously as possible, and I will wait here for you." [This was said in an undertone, and heard only by the young

man.] When George had gone, Mr. Wilder, with a heavy heart, but disinclined to confess to Mr. Brooks that anything illegitimate had occurred, desired that gentleman to continue with him the examination of the accounts. This was done, and everything else found correct.

"Now take a chair, Mr. Brooks," said Mr. Wilder; "I expect Mr. Butler in presently, and we will straighten out the affair." He said this in an apparently careless tone of voice, but at the same moment he was feeling, "Would it might be done as easily."

He could not sit still. Handing Mr. Brooks the newspaper, he walked out of his counting-room and paced the floor, lost in thought.

"John," said he to the porter, "do you know if Mr. Butler ever lunches down town?"

"Yes, sir, sometimes, I believe."

"Do you know where?"

"Yes, sir."

"Go and see if you can find him; tell him I want to see him immediately."

In the course of time, which to Mr. Wilder

seemed an age, but which was really very short for the distance, George returned, with the information that Mr. Butler was not at home, and had not been home since dinner time the day before. John soon returned, with no information of the missing book-keeper. Mr. Wilder went back to the counting-room, where he had left his customer reading, and said, "Mr. Brooks, there is something in this affair I do not understand. Will you allow me to take the letter and receipt for the twelve hundred and fifty dollars a few minutes? I want to carry it to the banker's."

"Certainly, take it; I have other business to attend to, and will look in on you again. I shall want to see some goods, and I may not be in till to-morrow."

Mr. Wilder never walked to State Street so fast before. He went in to see the banker, on whom the draft was made, and asked him if he would oblige him by looking over his files, and allowing him to see a draft (if he had one), paid July 3rd, drawn by Swift & Brooks, and payable to the order of Wilder &

Clark. Search was made, and the draft found ; the indorsement examined carefully by Mr. Wilder, and unhesitatingly pronounced *a forgery !*

Mr. Wilder then asked the banker, with whom he was well acquainted, if he would allow him to take the draft with him, promising to be responsible for it, which request was granted.

Even if Mr. Wilder had been sure that Mr. Butler was the author of the forgery, (as he had every reason to believe he was), and could he have had an opportunity to talk with him, and had he shown signs of penitence, it is possible, that this, being his first offence, would have been overlooked ; for in this case, as in every other, his excellent heart would have shrunk from a public exposure which must have resulted disastrously to the culprit ; and he would have endeavored, by the exercise of kind forbearance and forgiveness, to win him back to rectitude again. But he had placed implicit confidence in him ; and although there were many disagreeable ways about him, he

had trusted him without limit, never for an instant having had a suspicious thought of him from the very first, because he had evinced so much care for his interest, and had been so unweariedly punctual in his attention to his duties (a punctuality and a constancy which was now being accounted for in a very different way from what Mr. Wilder, in his feeling of security, had imagined). But what was he to do now? He did not know but at that very moment, Butler was, in the name of the firm, negotiating for funds, with which to make his escape. He did not know but there were a hundred such cases on his books as that of Swift & Brooks, and which time only could develop, unless Butler could be found, and a confession extorted. He did not know but he was himself a *bankrupt*, and made so by the duplicity of his book-keeper.

He very properly went first to his bank, to see what his balance was: *that* he found right, so far as his memory assisted him; he ordered no checks, with the signature of his firm, to be paid at the bank until further orders, unless

presented personally by himself. [This he arranged in such a way as to excite curiosity only, no feeling of suspicion at the bank]. He then called on his attorney, who, hearing the whole case, told him that immediate and thorough steps must be taken to secure the criminal, and the services of the police were at once engaged.

Butler's boarding-house was searched, but nothing found there to implicate him, so nothing was removed, except a life-like photograph, which would be of invaluable service for purposes of identification.

The detective wanted to know something of Butler's associations, who were his companions, &c. This Mr. Wilder could not enlighten him on, but knowing that a young man, named Carroll, one of his business neighbors, was engaged to Butler's sister, of him inquiry was made.

Mr. Carroll said that Butler came into his office at about noon, and stated that Mr. Wilder had gone from the store, to be absent till afternoon ; that a bill had been presented for

payment; that there were no funds drawn to meet the demand, and he had borrowed of Mr. Carroll three hundred and fifty dollars, (the amount he said was needed at the store), until Mr. Wilder should have returned. *Now* both Mr. Wilder and the detective knew that Butler had absconded.

Telegrams describing him were sent to New York, Albany, Portland, and other places to which he might have fled, and requests were made that officers should be on the alert to apprehend him if discovered. In the mean time, the detective, accompanied by Mr. Carroll, sought for him wherever they knew, or supposed he was *in* the habit of visiting. From Mr. Carroll, Mr. Wilder learned something of which he had been entirely ignorant before, — and which the former gentleman had heard from Butler's sister, but which he had forborne to inform Mr. Wilder, from a disinclination to injure or disgrace the young man and his relations, his own interests being so closely allied to the family, — and that was, that for some years Butler had been addicted

to the habit of gambling ; but he added, that he had been informed that it was only to a small extent, and his belief had been that these gaming propensities had been gratified from his own individual resources, he never for a moment having suspected that Butler had appropriated a dollar of Mr. Wilder's funds unlawfully, for any purpose.

Possessed of this information, the detective passed the night in visiting gaming-houses, but with no success. They were determined to do all in their power to capture him, although it was probable that he had left the city.

Mr. Wilder, on returning to the store, told George what he had discovered, and he was overwhelmed with surprise ; but as this was no time for folding hands, even if such a proceeding were productive of any good, it was determined by Mr. Wilder to have letters addressed to all his debtors, enclosing a statement of the balance due Wilder & Clark, and requesting an immediate reply as to the correctness of the account. This involved con-

siderable labor, and more time than any *one* could give, so, to facilitate the process, Mr. Wilder asked George if he thought Henry Clement was competent to assist him, if he could borrow his services for a few days. George replied, that during Mr. Clement's prosperity, Henry had enjoyed unusual facilities for improvement in penmanship and book-keeping, and his assistance would be valuable if it could be procured. Fortunately, Mr. Wilder was successful, the arrangement was made, and that very night the two young men commenced the task. They were to draw off the accounts, and write the letters of a uniform pattern, a form for which was furnished them by Mr. Wilder, and read as follows:—

— “BOSTON, ———, ———.

“MY DEAR SIR: Accompanying please find a statement of your account, as it appears on our books. We send it to you at this time, as an error occurs in our books, and we are anxious to trace it. Hoping you will .

excuse the trouble it will cause you, and requesting an immediate reply,

“ We are, respectfully,

“ Your obedient servants.”

These statements and letters were to be prepared and written as rapidly as possible, consistent with correctness, and placed before Mr. Wilder as soon as completed, for him to sign ; then, enclosing a stamp for the reply, they were mailed. Strict silence was enjoined on both the young men ; they were told to allude to it to no one ; even the porter of the store was ignorant of the cause of Mr. Butler's absence, and the extra amount of labor now to be performed.

Mr. Wilder left them to carry out his intentions, and went home, telling them as he went, that they would have to stay till late in the evening for many days, till the work was accomplished. To this they did not object, for they would either of them do anything in their power for the good man ; and George was only happy that the education he had received at

the Commercial College was so soon proving of value to him. Irritated, and with an aching heart, Mr. Wilder turned his steps homeward, but not without a feeling of thanksgiving that he still had in George one in whom he could implicitly rely. At home he did not allude to the affair, giving as a reason for absence from dinner, press of business ; and no one looking in on that family circle that evening would have imagined that anything of an extraordinary nature weighed on the mind of the husband and father ; that he was burdened with the knowledge that the young man he had been like a parent to all this time, had shown so much ingratitude, and so poorly repaid the many kindnesses of which he *had* been the recipient ; but if there *had* been any emotion of anger in his heart, it was dispelled when, on the conclusion of his family devotions, in repeating the Lord's prayer (as was his custom), he came to the words, " Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us."



CHAPTER XIV.

ANOTHER ARREST.

THE young men wrote at their desks at the store until nearly twelve o'clock that night, and on the next morning they were found at their duty at an unusually early hour by Mr. Wilder, who expressed surprise at the large amount of labor already accomplished. A minute was kept of the individuals and firms addressed, that their names could be checked as fast as intelligence should be received from them.

Mr. Brooks came in, and as much of the affair as was absolutely necessary was told him. Mr. Wilder being satisfied that the transaction, so far as Messrs. Swift & Brooks were concerned, was a correct one, gave that

firm credit for the twelve hundred and fifty dollars which they had forwarded in good faith, and little as he felt like the confinement it imposed, he sold Mr. Brooks a large bill of goods.

The frequent necessity for showing goods during the day, rendered George's position one of considerable perplexity, and of necessity retarded the work on the books ; but as he passed all his evenings now at the store, the work steadily progressed, Henry's assistance being very important.

Mr. Wilder had telegraphed to Mr. Clark on the day of the discovery, and written him full particulars since, requesting him to keep officers on the watch in New York ; but it seemed hardly probable that Butler would expose himself in that city, where he was quite well known in business circles as the book-keeper of the Boston branch, and where information of his presence would soon reach the ears of Mr. Clark, if he should appear in public, and thus his apprehension be made certain.

At noon of the second day after the discovery, a gentleman from Providence called at the store, and in course of conversation, remarked, incidentally: "I saw Mr. Butler last night, but did not have an opportunity to speak with him; in fact, he did not see *me*." [He had presumed that Butler was in Providence on business for Mr. Wilder.]

"Did you? Where?" asked Mr. Wilder, earnestly.

"On Westminster Street, about nine o'clock."

"Alone?"

"No; he was walking up the street with Fred Harlow, a pretty fast fellow, too, he is. I was surprised to see Butler in his company; but what is the matter with you? You look queerly. Nothing wrong, is there?"

"My dear sir," replied Mr. Wilder, "I did not intend to speak of Butler, or any of the circumstances over which I am now mourning, and which are nearly crushing me to any one at present; but you are an old friend, and you may have it in your power to assist me." He then related the principal incidents of the

sad affair, concluding by saying that he should notify the police at once, and the information he had just received would probably result in sending an officer to Providence to look Butler up, and that his friend could undoubtedly render valuable assistance to the officer by furnishing information of persons and places. To this the gentleman heartily assented, saying,—

“I shall go home to-night; any service it is in my power to perform in your interest, you may depend on; you have my sympathy, and you shall have my aid.”

As Mr. Wilder had expected, a detective officer was sent to Providence, and two days and nights spent in search, in which he was assisted by Mr. Wilder's friend, and an officer of Providence. Every known gaming-house, every house of ill repute or even questionable character, was visited, but no trace found. Harlow, with whom he had been seen, was conferred with, but he professed to believe that Butler came down on business, and returned on the early morning train. He was asked at what hotel he stopped, but even on this subject, he plead ignorance.

At last the detective concluded to take the evening steamboat train to New York, thinking that Butler's friends, suspecting danger, had hurried him off to that city. He accordingly entered the cars, and quietly took his seat. He had no hopes of finding him on board the train, so he muffled himself, and sat in a half doze until the arrival of the train at Stonington, where the cars were exchanged for the boat ; then, going on board, he stepped up to the clerk's office to procure his state-room key ; while waiting for his turn, his eyes fell on a young man, whose countenance struck him as remarkably like the photograph he had seen of Butler ; so impressed was he, that he determined to keep a sharp look-out for him, and watch his movements closely. They both arrived at the clerk's window at the same instant, and the officer fell back a little, to enable the stranger to advance first.

"I want a state-room," said the young man.

"What name?" inquired the clerk.

"William Bates," was the reply.

The ticket was given, the number of which the detective heard called, and then hastened for his own key, and followed on. Supper was ready, and both repaired to the cabin; after supper, those of the passengers who desired to smoke, went forward to indulge. Mr. Bates was one of the number, and was joined by the officer, who, drawing a cigar from his case, asked for a light. This was courteously granted, and in a moment they were engaged in conversation.

"If Bates *is* my man, he is a shrewd one," thought the officer, for with all his adroitness he failed to cause, by look, word, or act, any evidence of guilt to escape him. As they became more intimate and communicative, the detective broached the subject of crime in general: this was brought around in a very delicate and natural manner, and no suspicion created, Bates not only entering freely into the subject, but volunteering many remarks, of a moralizing character, in regard to the fearful increase of wickedness in the land.

After quite a continued conversation on this subject, the officer ingeniously called attention to the frequency of defalcations, alluding to one or two large ones which had come to light within a few weeks in New York city, and reports of which had surprised and shocked the whole community. Mr. Bates was quite as willing to converse on that, as on others matters, and the officer was almost induced to consider this a case of mistaken identity, when it occurred to him that he would change his policy ; so he expressed it, as his opinion, that extravagance in dress, and fondness for fast horses, and gambling mania, brought many a young man into a position from which he was unable to extricate himself honorably, and he would be tempted to borrow a little money of his employer without his knowledge, hoping "luck" would assist him in refunding it, and so go on little by little, until the penitentiary closed the victim's career ; that probably none of those persons, who were now serving their sentences in the prisons for

these offences, intended to defraud at the outset.

Bates had imagined all this time that his companion was either a merchant or a banker. His dress, appearance, manner, and conversation combined to foster this delusion, and observing this, the officer took care not to undeceive him ; so Bates, in answer to some recital of his companion, mentioned some young men of his acquaintance who had been brought up under religious influences at home, but coming to the city, had first desired to dress better than their means would permit, then some of their friends, driving fast horses, they must do so, too ; then they would go to a gambling-house, from curiosity, and seeing others winning so easily, they would risk a little money, then a little more ; now winning, and then losing, until not only had the habit become so fixed as to make it impossible to break it off, but their peculations were too extensive to permit of a restitution.

Betting on horse-races was spoken of as

lamentably prevalent among young men, clerks in stores and banks. "Yes," said the officer, "Providence is quite a place for horse-racing, is it not? You are a resident there, I imagine."

"N — no, — or, yes, I am *now*," said Bates, hesitatingly, and exhibiting just a little embarrassment in his manner, which the officer did not fail to observe.

"Do you know a man by the name of Harlow in Providence? he is a lover of the turf, I believe," said the officer.

"Yes, I know him, or rather know *of* him."

"Providence is rather a pleasant place for a residence, is it not?" inquired the detective.

"Yes," said Bates, having now fully recovered his equanimity, "I used to live in Boston, but I like Providence better; still, I think I should prefer New York, to either."

"How long have you lived in Providence?"

"O, a few weeks only, or months rather," said Bates, a little flurried.

The officer turned abruptly round, and looking Bates steadily in the eye, asked him, —

“Do you know a firm in Boston of the style of Wilder & Clark?”

A pistol unexpectedly discharged at his side could not have started Bates any more; but hesitating to reply to this, the next remark settled the whole matter.

“Mr. Butler, I have a warrant for your arrest; you are my prisoner, on a charge of embezzlement.”

Bates, or Butler as we shall now call him, shook from head to foot. He was as tractable as a child. The strategy of the officer had proved successful. Suffering himself to be led by the arm to a less frequented part of the boat, the officer told him that he must accompany him a prisoner to his state-room, and he should detain him in New York until the necessary papers for his removal to Massachusetts should have been executed. Guilty as he was of an enormous offence, and comparatively hardened as he must have been, he had not

sufficient command over himself to feign ignorance or innocence under the piercing eye of the experienced detective; and in his case, as in thousands of other instances, Satan leads into trouble, but rarely defends his victims when they find themselves in his meshes.

Butler was conducted to the state-room of his companion, where the two remained until the arrival of the boat in New York, when he was safely lodged in the Tombs.

A telegram was at once sent to Mr. Wilder, and Mr. Clark notified. The latter visited Butler at his cell, but found him exceedingly reticent and downcast, heartily ashamed of himself; and now, fully realizing the terrible disgrace he had brought upon himself and family, he would not converse, and only replied to questions propounded, in monosyllables.

What would he not have given to have been placed back to the position he occupied a year ago? *Then* his crime had not been committed, he enjoyed his employer's confidence, and had

an excellent prospect of a promotion to a partnership in a firm he had heretofore so faithfully served. *Now* he was a criminal, in a felon's cell, with a prospect before him of spending many years in a prison.



CHAPTER XV.

THE PROMOTION.

FOUR days after his arrest found Butler in the jail at Boston, and on the day of his arrival Mr. Wilder called on him, — and what a meeting that was! It was a touching scene.

The strong man bowed down with sorrow, not so much on account of the loss he already knew he had sustained, but because he had good reason to fear he should ere long know of more of his late book-keeper's embezzlement; and the latter, so changed from his manner when first arrested, endeavored, with only partial success, to maintain a demeanor of unconcern. After the first outburst of sorrowful indignation on the part of Mr. Wilder, which

had apparently no effect on Butler, the former controlled himself sufficiently to ask why he had done so.

“ O, Charles, you know how much confidence I have always placed in you. I never suspected you of anything dishonest in my life. I increased your salary from year to year, without a hint from you that it would be wanted. I granted you all the liberty you asked ; nay, I urged you to take recreation time after time, which you declined. I supposed your object in refusing it was on account of the interest you felt in my business, and yet you have been months, I don't know but years, robbing me, and your constant attendance at your desk has been occasioned by your fear to leave your books exposed to my scrutiny. I placed so much reliance in you, that for years I have not examined them with a view to their correctness ; and yet you have abused my trust in you, to how great an extent I do not know ; but I have taken steps to have your accounts adjusted, and shall know before long whether I am actually ruined or not.”

To all this Butler preserved a stoical indifference and a resolute silence.

“And what adds to my sorrow,” continued he, “is the manner in which you hear all this. No contrition ; no explanation ; no answer at all.” Then, for the first time, Butler growled out, —

“You have made your charge ; now prove it.”

“I shall have to, Charles. I would gladly screen you from the punishment your offence will inevitably receive ; but I cannot. I shall see you again. I am not angry. I have not lived all my years without seeing something of trouble, — loss of friends, and many serious legitimate losses ; but I never met with a misfortune which affected my heart as this ; no loss, in every respect, its equal. The financial loss is comparatively nothing ; but I have lost my confidence in one I have looked upon as incorruptible. Do take the right view of this matter, and when I see you again, do feel sorrowful for what you have done, and a part of my distress will be relieved.

“ I suppose it would be folly to ask you how much beside the twelve hundred and fifty dollars you have appropriated, — would it not ? ”

“ I have no confessions to make. You made the charge, now prove it,” repeated Butler, in the same tone as before.

“ Well,” said Mr. Wilder (and now the strong man wept), “ Well, Charles, it will be a long time before I recover from this shock. I don’t know but you have made me a bankrupt. O, that I should have lived to see this day ! ” and, without trusting himself to say more, he hurried from the jail.

The labor on the books, and in preparing and mailing the inquiries into his customers’ accounts had been finished, and Mr. Wilder was contemplating the employment of some one, perhaps an expert, to examine and adjust his books. To do this, he called on his friend, the experienced proprietor of the Commercial College, to ask him to recommend some one to perform the duty correctly, and in the shortest possible time. Said the teacher, —

“ What has become of that young man

Hutchins? He has not left your employment, I hope, has he?"

"No, indeed; I am glad to say he is with me yet. I consider him a jewel, as my friend, Mr. Barrett, often calls him."

"Well, then," said the teacher, why don't you let *him* do it?"

"What, he? He isn't competent, is he?" asked Mr. Wilder.

"As thoroughly competent as any one I could suggest. No young man ever graduated from this school with a better general business education. I could name others who have had more practice, perhaps, since they left here, but he is as well qualified to perform the service as any one; and if the case were mine, he should do it. You still continue to have confidence in him, do you not?"

"As much as I have in myself; and I am very glad to find assistance so near home. But if he is competent to examine my accounts, and detect errors, if any exist, why is he not able to keep a set of books correctly. I have reason to fear that they are incorrect,

and my former book-keeper will have charge of them no longer.”

“He is capable, Mr. Wilder, and I can recommend him without hesitation.”

“I thank you,” said Mr. Wilder, “and shall make the experiment. His modesty has probably prevented his praising himself, and so I have been kept in ignorance of his qualifications.”

“George,” said Mr. Wilder, on his return to the store, “who can I get to keep the books now Mr. Butler has gone? Do you know of any one who can come?”

“No, sir,” replied George.

“I thought you studied book-keeping at the Commercial College?”

“I did, sir.”

“Then how is it your are not able to undertake it?”

“I think I am, sir.”

“What?” asked Mr. Wilder, and the nearest approach to a smile for many days played over his face for a moment. “What? Why did you not tell me before?”

"First," said George, smiling, "because you never asked me ; and second, because I didn't know you would care about my doing it."

"Do you consider yourself competent to assume the sole control of my books, and keep them correctly after having made a thorough examination of them?" asked Mr. Wilder.

"I do, sir."

"Very well, then, I shall give you Mr. Butler's position, and you may commence your duties at once.

"At the time you were receiving your presents for the act of humanity for which we all felt so grateful, I had it in my mind to make you some testimonial of my regard and appreciation, but no favorable opportunity was afforded. But I have not forgotten the act or the actor ; and I take this opportunity to express, in a partial way, my recognition of your services by appointing you my book-keeper, to date from the day Mr. Butler left the desk, at a salary of, at present, one thousand dollars per annum. Do as well in your new position

as you have in your old one, and I shall be perfectly satisfied. Your salary shall be increased as your services may warrant."

"I thank you, sir, a thousand times, and will endeavor to prove worthy of the confidence reposed in me."

During this conversation (which took place in Mr. Wilder's private office), Henry was at work at the desk in the counting-room, and it was intended to have dispensed with his services that very day had Mr. Wilder provided himself with a book-keeper from any other source. So when it had been decided for George to assume the duties just assigned him, Mr. Wilder asked him if he should like Henry's services permanently, if they could be secured, for, said he, —

"The concern he has been with is going out of business very soon, and if it is advisable we can retain him, and if you think him capable, he may take your late position."

"O, yes, sir, he is capable, perhaps more so than I; and he would like to be here always.

It would be very pleasant for both of us," answered George.

"Call him in here," said Mr. Wilder. Henry came.

"Henry, I have appointed George my book-keeper, leaving a vacancy. Your firm is to go out of business, and if you would like to stay with us, I am disposed to keep you, and pay you the same salary as George has been receiving? Are you disposed to remain?"

"I am, sir, and obliged to you besides," answered Henry.

"Very well, then, if the plan can be accomplished, as I have no doubt it can, I may as well see to it at once." The arrangement was effected, and Mr. Wilder returned.

"Now, then, it is settled," said he. "You will both do your duty, I am sure, and I shall take pleasure in doing anything in my power to promote the happiness of both of you. George, draw a check for twenty-five dollars, and bring it to me to sign." It was done. Turning to Henry, Mr. Wilder said, —

"Henry, your regular employment with me

commences to-day. This check you will accept for your assistance the past few days on my accounts."

With thanks Henry accepted the donation, and returned to his employment.

The mail now regularly brought replies from parties who had been addressed on the subject of their accounts ; and so far, everything corresponded with the statements on the books. Still Mr. Wilder did not feel safe, for there were yet many to hear from ; in fact none of their heaviest accounts had been verified, and as near as he could judge all of Butler's embezzlement must have been done in the same way as in the case of Swift & Brooks ; that is, if money was sent by mail, he would appropriate a part or the whole of the remittance himself, and receipt for it in the name of his employers, but of course make no entry on the cash-book or ledger, and trust to luck in settlement to cover up the affair till time and opportunity was afforded to make a false entry and balance the account.

Another pile of letters came by the after-

noon mail, and among them was a statement of a balance from a Milwaukie house which did not correspond with their books, and in which they found a deficit of one item, fifteen hundred and seventy-five dollars ; and before the week closed four others, in smaller sums, amounting in the aggregate to four thousand seven hundred and seventy-five dollars.

They had at last heard from all their customers, and received full and indisputable evidence of Butler's guilt in every instance. He was still in jail awaiting developments.

George's good fortune in promotion placed him in a position to gratify a long cherished hope that his mother might take a house in Boston, and he once more have a home. Accordingly he wrote to her, informing her of the sad affair at the store, in which Mr. Butler was implicated, and which led to his preferment and consequent increase of salary, adding, that his necessary absence from her had always detracted from the pleasure he found in his residence in Boston, and requested her to think

favorably of his plan to lease a house in the city, and move as soon as possible. She, ready at all times to oblige her son when the means lay in her power, was really gratified herself by acceding to his proposition, and a very comfortable house was provided for them. Mrs. Hutchins had an opportunity to lease her house in the country, and in a few weeks they were cosily located in their new home, and Henry (for the two young men were still almost inseparable) came to board with them.

The intelligence of the proposed removal was received with the most unmistakable indications of regret on the part of Mrs. Rice and her whole household, with whom George had so long been a favorite, and in whose footsteps Henry was so faithfully following; and had the change not been for the purpose of uniting mother and son, it is probable that the strong and continuous arguments so strenuously urged to induce George to reconsider his determination to leave, would have proved successful; but as it was, Mrs. Rice was the

first to see the propriety of the step, appreciating, as she could, a mother's feelings under the circumstances ; and regretting, as she did, the necessity of losing so excellent inmates of her family, she could conscientiously interpose no objection ; and it is also probable that, would Mrs. Hutchins have consented to such an arrangement, all Mrs. Rice's family would have emigrated ; but it was her desire ; and that of her son, that their establishment should be a home for both,—an object that would have been defeated if any addition were made to their family.

In the case of Henry, his connection with George had been of so long duration, and the associations of the family were of so agreeable a nature, and had been so for so many years, that she considered him more in the light of a relation than an interloper.

Both Mr. and Mrs. Barrett and Mr. and Mrs. Wilder were very much pleased at the prospect of having Mrs. Hutchins and her son so near them ; and Mary, who looked upon the old lady as a second parent, was in

almost every day, at some hour, either in going to, or returning from school, to see "Mother Hutchins." And her sterling Christian character soon won for her warm friends in the church, in which she early secured seats for herself and family.



CHAPTER XVI.

THE VOYAGER RETURNED.

AT last the evidence was all in, and the grand jury found a bill against Charles Butler. He was put under heavy bonds for his appearance at the next term of court for trial, which his future brother-in-law, Mr. Carroll, furnished, and the disgraced young man was once more at liberty. At the appointed time the case was called up, witnesses were summoned for the prosecution and in attendance, but no prisoner! He had taken advantage of his temporary liberty to make good his escape, and justice was defrauded of her victim; and determined, as Mr. Wilder had schooled himself to be, to prosecute to the end (and the evidence was

so clear that there could be no doubt of the result), it must be confessed that he was not sorry that it had terminated as it had, for the treachery of an own son could not have affected him more ; and he had a horror of the thought of sending the poor young man to the penitentiary, where his testimony alone would most assuredly have consigned him.

Time passed on, and the ship *Lion* was due. Robert and his father had been heard from once. George had received a letter from Hong Kong, in which the former had written the glorious news that his father had given his heart to God. The particulars of that and his own experience at sea and in a foreign country were, however, reserved until he should have returned. He enclosed messages to be delivered to all the kind friends who had interested themselves in his behalf, and promised himself much pleasure in a reunion. Their voyage had been a pleasant one, and they were at that time to sail direct for Boston. He desired that Mr. Barrett should be informed that he had taken his letter for a sort

of text book, and endeavored to shape his life by the excellent advice it contained.

The newspapers were watched carefully, and one morning George saw with delight, under the head of marine news, "Arrived this day, ship Lion, Hong Kong."

She was consigned to the same parties as before, and George hurried down to the wharf, in the hope that she might have already come up; and she had. He saw her at the end of the dock, her name flying from the foretop; but both it and the ensign at the mizzen peak were at half mast!

"What can it mean? Who is dead?" Then George tried to think it was some public man who might have died, and whose memory they were honoring; but no other vessel had a similar badge of mourning. Then he knew it must be some one on board; of course an officer or passenger. Could it be Robert? Was it his father? Perhaps it was one of the mates? That would be a sad blow to their friends, but George, perhaps selfishly, but still very naturally, thought it would not afflict *him*

so severely. But he was not long in suspense, for he had gained the side of the ship, and was soon on board.

He met Robert coming out of the cabin, evidently going on shore. George was considerably relieved to know it was not *this* friend. In an instant they were in each other's arms. Robert broke the silence, the tears streaming down his cheeks, by sobbing out, "O, George, my father's dead! my father's dead!"

They went into the cabin, and as soon as Robert could control himself, he told George that three weeks before, during very heavy weather, his father was washed overboard, and seen no more. A boat was lowered, but their efforts were fruitless. O, how they blessed God that this sudden call had not found him unprepared!

Robert then told George that from the day of the prayer meeting his father had maintained devotion regularly, and was in many respects a changed man. But after they had been at sea several weeks he called his son

one day, and told him he had given up everything for Christ; and the moment he came to that conclusion, light broke in upon his soul.

The circumstances which had deprived Robert of his only living parent, also interfered with his continuing in the seafaring life his friends had determined for him, at least for the present. His voyage had been useful to him, and had his father's life been spared, he would, in proper time, undoubtedly have been fully prepared to take command of a ship. For although he had enjoyed the privileges of the cabin, and was not entered on the ship's articles as a sailor, he had opportunities of learning much theoretically, and had studied navigation with his father, whose purpose it had been to make him his successor when competent.

Captain Ashley was in very comfortable circumstances, and left property which would be his son's now, he being sole heir; and there was nothing which showed Robert's changed disposition more markedly than in

the application he made to Mr. Barrett, at an early day, to assist in the settlement of his father's affairs, and then to become trustee of his estate till he should come of age. Acting under his advice, there were investments made of the funds received from the sale of some of the property, while his share in the ship, being considered good paying stock, was allowed to remain. But what was Robert to do for employment?

Mr. Barrett, in investigating the affairs of Captain Ashley, had frequent occasion to visit the ship, and opportunities were afforded him to ascertain to his satisfaction from conversations with the mates that Robert's conduct during the entire voyage had been exemplary, and such as became a Christian; that as often as possible he would converse with the sailors, loan them good books from his library, and supply them with religious tracts and papers; while on the Sabbath (which his lamented father made a day of rest as much as possible, and who invariably, when the weather permitted, would collect such of the ship's com-

pany as were not on duty, to attend divine worship aft), he would spend much time in special pleading with some of those who evinced interest in holy things. And the result of these interviews and labors was apparent.

The mates said there was no profanity to be heard, and though neither was a professor of religion, they both testified to Mr. Barrett, that during all their seafaring days they never met a more obedient, orderly, quiet body of men before, and they were not composed of any better material either ; for out of the half dozen who professed a hope in Christ, three were brought down to the ship before leaving port in a state of beastly intoxication, unable on recovering to know how or when they came on board.

There is no position on board a ship so unpleasant for the holder, or more despised by the sailors, than that occupied by a young man, who, because he is related to the captain or owners of the vessel, while learning, or pretending to learn the art of seamanship, lives

in the cabin, and messes with the officers, and does not participate in all the perils and hardships of the fore-castle hands. Such a one is said to be preparing to "jump into the cabin windows." And yet, Robert holding just this position, by his gentle deportment, Christian example, and daily association with the sailors for the sole purpose of doing them good, so wrought upon their hearts, and won their affections, that they learned to love him, and through him some were led to love his Saviour.

But again. What was Robert to do for employment?

The evidence of his reformation was so positive, that so far as punishment was concerned, it was not deemed necessary to banish him from home any more; and as the facilities for promotion he would have enjoyed had his father lived, were now lost to him, and as his natural tastes would never have led him to follow the sea for any love of the life, it was considered best, under the circumstances, to provide for him a situation on the land. And

this they forthwith proceeded to do, and through influence, soon accomplished, and he was located in the counting-room of a ship chandler, named Samuel Martin, a devoted Christian man, where he merited the confidence bestowed on him; and away from his store he was as unremitting in his labors of love for those around him, as he had ever been zealous in the service of Satan. He had one peculiarity: his tastes or sense of duty led him to feel a particular solicitude for the sailor, so much neglected, and his new business pleased him because he was now necessarily thrown into the company of sea-going men. On Sundays, morning and evening, he might be seen on the wharves, or on board of vessels when permission was granted him, talking or praying with the occupants of the forecastle, and inviting them to attend church or prayer meeting.

In reply to the question, sometimes propounded to him, "Why do you not join the church?" he gave occasionally an equivocal

reply, but the reason was soon apparent. The church to which most of his friends belonged, and to which for their sakes his inclinations might have led him, was at a great distance from the business part of the city, away from the wharves where he loved so much to labor for the Master, and was never to any extent frequented by the class of individuals with whom Robert most sympathized. *He* felt for the sailor; his father had been one; he had been thrown into their society more or less all his life, and his first and only voyage had had a tendency to increase his love for the race, if it had not fully developed his fondness for their pursuits; therefore, in the prosecution of his missionary work among mariners, when his invitations were accepted, he introduced his company, not to the distant house of God where his friends worshipped, but to the Bethel church, nearer in point of distance, and more congenial from its surroundings to their feelings; because there they would be more likely to meet more of their own calling in life. And he very soon

learned to love this church too, its people, its pastor ; while in return, his generous, whole-souled Christian charity so won their esteem that he was counted a valuable acquisition, and before long, one Sabbath morning saw all his friends, old and young, at the Mariner's church, to witness the solemn and beautiful spectacle of Robert putting on Christ by baptism.

He endeavored to seek out those of his early associates who had united with him in serving another master so faithfully, and lead them the way to Christ. He remembered Mrs. Rice's boarding-house, and the evil example he had set there ; he remembered being the first one to lead that lady's son, Joseph, from rectitude, into spending his evenings at the theatre, introducing him to companions whose influence was so bad that he was disgraced, and dismissed from his employment ; and Robert's fascinations were no less irresistible for inducing Joseph to attend church, than they had been in leading him into sin, and he finally had the blessed

privilege of seeing him walking in the way of the Lord ; while the return of that happiness which she had lost in seeing her son so wicked, led his mother to think of her condition ; and the unusual, but no less delightful spectacle was the privilege of a crowded assembly, when mother and son were admitted to the church of God, as worthy members.

Robert's early education had not been as good as most boys are favored with, but as he grew older and wiser in other matters, he felt the necessity of learning more, so, with that indomitable will that impelled him to overcome other obstacles, he found time not devoted to his secular pursuits or religious duties, to study and improve his mind.

He frequently took part in their meetings, and his voice, whether heard in prayer, or in the fervent appeals to his unconverted friends, for which he had a wonderful gift, were listened to by all with pleasure, and many with profit, while some thought they saw a promise of special usefulness in the future.

His talent for public speaking was apparent to all, and his employer, who often attended the Bethel church, and had therefore frequently heard him speak, was induced one day in conversation with Mr. Barrett to allude to his impression that Robert ought to study in some institution with a view to adopting the Christian ministry as a profession.

Mr. Barrett's reply was not more cautious than was his usual custom, but his affirmative was not as prompt as was expected, for he had never heard him speak; and having had no conversation on the subject with Robert, as in fact had no one else, he preferred to wait until an opportunity was afforded to judge for himself. This was soon to be; for not long after a public meeting was held, at which addresses were made on the subject of the conversion of mariners, gotten up by the church of which Robert was a member, and at which he was to speak.

Mr. Barrett, and in fact all of Robert's friends were present, and if he had entertained any doubts of the young man's ability

before, they were dispelled. So to this the matter was resolved: Robert is undoubtedly a true Christian; he has an unmistakable talent for public speaking, and an indisputable affection for, and delight in, addressing the sailor. He needs a better education, and with that, he will be the means, under God, of doing great good.

This matter was settled in the minds of all Robert's friends, even before he had been consulted; to do *this* was then the next point, Mr. Barrett invited Robert one night to meet a few friends at his house, among them his employer, and in the course of the evening the subject was broached. Robert's reply was worthy of him:—

“I am happy only when I can be doing something for my Master. I owe him a debt of gratitude I can only begin to repay by the devotion of my life and services to him. I have too much trust in you, my dear friends, to suppose you would advise me to do anything that would check, or in any way interfere, with the sole purpose of my life; so

that, if you think I can be of any service in my feeble way to assist in the advancement of Christ's kingdom, by devoting my life to the work of preaching, I can truly say, it is the work in which I should most delight."

A season of prayer concluded the deliberations of the evening, and after Robert had left, it was decided for him to attend at once to the work of preparation. The young man's private purse was sufficiently able to defray his expenses in the prosecution of his studies, and he soon after entered a seminary to commence his work.



CHAPTER XVII.

BUSINESS FIDELITY REWARDED.



ENRY'S father had succeeded far better in his business as an insurance agent than he had anticipated, and he had been appointed a special agent for the company to be located in Boston, and to this place he removed his family. This, of course, resulted in the withdrawal of Henry from his pleasant home at Mrs. Hutchins's. But they were still to be neighbors, for Mr. Clement rented a house on the same street, and almost directly opposite.

Fanny, the eldest daughter, was engaged in giving music lessons, while Louise obtained a position as teacher in one of the public

schools. They were both well educated, their instruction having been of the most liberal character during the days of their father's prosperity. Of course they did not mingle in the gay and fashionable society which had been their wont in their more affluent circumstances. They would not have been welcomed in such circles now adversity had come, even if their inclination had led them there — which fortunately it did not ; they found their little world now within themselves, and each individual of the family vied with the other in attempts to soften the blow which at one time threatened to dethrone the reason of the husband and father. And this very affliction served, in their case, as it has done in multitudes of others, to strengthen the affection of the members of the family towards each other. The Bible was now no longer a sealed volume ; the family altar, which was erected years before, but which the weight of riches had broken down, now that that load had been removed, was rebuilt, and their disposi-

tions led them to the house of God more regularly and with different feelings than when display and fashion had been the ruling influences.

As soon as Charles Butler had furnished, through his friends, the required bonds, and had been set at liberty, he made prompt preparations to place himself beyond the reach of the officers of the law ; and it was long after his failure to respond to the call for his appearance at court, before any, beyond his immediate family circle, knew of his whereabouts ; and when the case was called, although Mr. Carroll and the other bondsmen were held responsible for his departure, they denied all knowledge of him, and pretended that they had acted in good faith in the whole affair.

About two years after this, and when almost every one but the parties most intimately interested in the transaction had forgotten all about it, Mr. Wilder received the following letter : —

“MONTREAL, July 15, 18—.

“MR. FREDERIC WILDER.

“MY DEAR SIR: Your kindness to me through the many years I was in your employ has never been forgotten, although I abused your confidence, and have destroyed my reputation, at least in your city, for life. Your treatment towards me has always been more like that of a parent towards his child, than that of an employer toward his help; and now I have reflected on my course, I am deeply sensible of the treachery of which I have been guilty, and humbly ask your forgiveness.

“Soon after reaching Canada I obtained a situation in a large establishment, and am still employed there. I relinquished my habit of gambling, and from the day of my arrest to the present moment I have not touched a card, for amusement even; and God helping me, I never will. I shall never forget the excellent counsel you gave me at the jail, which I received at that time so coldly, so insultingly; but the seed sown then has sprung up,

and I am determined that the future of my life shall prove to you that your Christian advice and example have not been in vain.

"No one here suspects me of crime, and it will be apparent to you that it is policy to allow all to remain in ignorance. I beg you to allow my secret to remain such in your bosom. My pay, at first small, has, in consequence of my attention to duty, been increased, so that I have, by economy, been able to save five hundred dollars, which I enclose you, and request you to accept as the first instalment on my obligation to you. I shall continue to labor hard and live savingly until I have paid you all, principal and interest; and when time has so far advanced as to make it safe, I shall see you, and on my knees beg your pardon for my crime, and endeavor to prove, by a life of propriety, that I have been benefited through your instrumentality.

"I also owe an apology to George Hutchins (in whom you have confidence, and he deserves it), and an explanation which I intrust to you to make to him.

“I noticed, from the first that he was a good boy, and that I could not carry my nefarious work on long without being detected, if I did not take steps to prejudice your mind against him, and thereby insure his discharge; to that end, I treated him ill. I told you everything I could find against him, and manufactured much more that had no existence in fact, knowing that his knowledge of book-keeping and quick perception would sooner or later result in my ruin if he was allowed to remain. His conduct towards me through all my ill treatment to him has afflicted me deeply since. I have had time to reflect, and I wish you to express this my sentiment to him, and ask his forgiveness; and let me ask you both to remain silent, so far as my location is, at least for the present.

“My health is not good. I have never been well since my fever attack; but my prayer is, that my life may be spared until I have liquidated my obligations to you. May I again ask that you will not inform any one of this, so that I may not be interrupted in

the now sole purpose of my life,—to place you financially in the position you occupied before I was led astray.

“A letter will reach me, if directed to my full name, 38 Rue d’Eau, Montreal.

“Yours with much respect,

“CHARLES BUTLER.”

This was very unexpected news to Mr. Wilder, and the recovery of a portion of his lost funds, and the prospect of still further additions, was not more gratifying than to know that a reformation had taken place in the character of his late book-keeper. He sat down on the day of the receipt of the communication, and penned the following:—

“BOSTON, June 19, 18—.

“MY DEAR CHARLES: ‘There is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth.’ I could but thank God that you are not lost; that you still have a heart affected by the past, and a disposition to amend in the future. You shall always have my prayers that the

good Spirit may continue to move, until the work of grace is complete.

"The remittance of five hundred dollars came duly to hand, and I thank you for remembering me.

"I shall continue to keep your secret as you request, and until you say that it will be congenial to your feelings, no one but George and I shall know it.

"George has desired me to say that you have his full, free, hearty forgiveness for anything you may have done with a view to his injury, and you have our prayers for your continued prosperity in business, and, above all, that you may give your heart to God.

"I pray Heaven that your life may be spared many years to serve the Lord, and do much good.

"I am, yours affectionately,

"F. WILDER."

The business abilities of George and Henry had been tested to Mr. Wilder's entire satisfaction. Their trade for the four years

now elapsed since Mr. Butler's defalcation had been steadily increasing, and quite profitable; and Mr. Wilder, although by no means an old man, had been many years in trade, and had amassed a considerable fortune. His losses had been comparatively few, and he felt that he could now with propriety retire from active life, and spend the balance of his days in the enjoyment of what he had with honor accumulated.

Mr. Barrett, when he made the statement to Mrs. Hutchins, that he should consider it a privilege to watch over the interests of her son, and at some time perhaps see an opportunity to render him additional service, had it in his mind to assist George into business when he should have reached the age of twenty-one, having no knowledge of Mr. Wilder's designs in the premises. But the latter gentleman had a plan of his own, which he had never confided to Mr. Barrett, until one day, in a conversation, George's approaching majority formed the principal topic. Said Mr. Barrett, —

“George will soon be old enough to start in life for himself. I have for a long time been looking forward anxiously to the opportunity I shall soon have of indicating my confidence in and regard for the young man whom we all have so much reason to regard with gratitude, and am desirous to consult with you as to the best course to pursue in the matter.”

“Well,” said Mr. Wilder, “I am quite ready to talk on that subject, for I was going to introduce it myself. I have done, thank God, business enough to entitle me to rest now; and though not what *you* would call rich,” he said with a smile, “yet I can with economy exist without more labor. I am going to retire from business at the close of the year.”

“If that is the case,” said Mr. Barrett, “I propose to furnish George with capital to carry on the same business, if there is not any objection.”

“And deprive me of the opportunity I have been anticipating?” inquired Mr. Wilder.

“Not at all,” replied Mr. Barrett. “I will

assist, and George and Henry, 'the inseparable,' shall continue together. They are of about the same age, I believe."

"Yes; Henry is about two months the junior, I think, but both will be twenty-one before the first of January."

Well, then, if that is the case, and you propose to retire with the close of the year, let the new copartnership commence with January first," said Mr. Barrett.

"Agreed," said Mr. Wilder; "now we will see the young men."

Astonishment and gratitude were the emotions of both George and Henry at this last act of generosity on the part of their friends; but Henry was probably more amazed than his companion, for George had received a hint more than once from a certain member of Mr. Barrett's family, that something was to be done for his benefit, but Henry felt that he had no claim to such a gratuity, and for a while it astounded him.

The newspapers of the first day of January, published the announcement of the dissolution

of the partnership of Wilder and Clark, and the formation of a new one under the style of Hutchins, Clement & Co., to continue the business of the late firm ; and in a card accompanying the advertisement, Mr. Wilder bespoke a liberal continuance of patronage.

In his frequent visits to the house of Mr. Barrett (for he had been a constant caller since his introduction to the family), George Hutchins and Mary Barrett had been thrown a great deal into each other's society, and it is not surprising that the brotherly and sisterly affection which they very early entertained towards each other should ripen into another and stronger relation. "Everybody" had observed it, in fact "everybody" had prophesied it, perhaps before the parties themselves had thoroughly realized it ; and when, a short time after, the new and handsome sign of Hutchins, Clement & Co. had been elevated to the position where that of Wilder & Clark had so long hung, George asked of Mr. Barrett the hand of Mary. His hearty affirmation was given, with an earnestness and emphasis

which indicated how agreeable the arrangement was to the parent. In order that these "everybodies," who "had known it all along," might enjoy the engagement with the parents and friends of the parties most intimately interested, Mr. and Mrs. Barrett gave a large party in honor of the event. As our acquaintance with the parties has been long and intimate enough to entitle us to an invitation, we will accept it ; and eight o'clock finds us at the door of their hospitable mansion.

Most of the guests are assembled ; and although there are a great many present who are strangers to us, we meet several of our old friends.

Of course Mother Hutchins is here, with the same gentle smile on her countenance, extending her hand in affectionate grasp to her many friends, all of whom love her, for "none knew her but to love her ; none named her but to praise."

Her hair has grown white ; but those gray hairs are an honor, and we imagine we detect some of that pride in her that she so naturally

felt some years since, on receiving George's picture, and the letter from Mr. Barrett acknowledging her son's services. We did not blame her then, or wonder at it; we do not now, for there is no sin in such pride. He had proved himself worthy of all the confidence reposed in him, and when the young merchant, with his betrothed on his arm, passed through the long spacious parlors to receive that mother's blessing, it was no wonder that as she saw them, the boy of her heart, and the young and beautiful creature he had chosen of all others to be his partner for life, his companion in joys and sorrows (and beautiful she was, not only in form and feature, but resplendent with grace of heart, transcending all personal charms), it is no wonder that her maternal eye should brighten, and just the least color in the world overspread her face, as she stood with extended arms to receive them, looking every inch a queen.

Mr. and Mrs. Barrett and Mr. and Mrs. Wilder were very happy. They had long anticipated this result, and had looked forward

to it with joyful expectation ; and if they, or Mr. and Mrs. Wood, George's uncle and aunt, who are present, do for a moment think of the trying ordeal of suspicion through which the young man once passed, the thought is instantly dispelled by the consciousness that but for the sorrowful circumstances of that occasion his many excellent qualities might have never been appreciated.

Mrs. Clement, Henry and Louise, we see present, but Mr. Clement is detained at home by illness. He has never recovered from the shock his misfortune caused, and rarely goes out in the evening. He is in failing health, although his family and immediate friends do not observe it. Fanny did not enter with her mother ; but before we have time to inquire about her, we see her coming in, accompanied by a tall, handsome, young man, whose bearded face has changed so much since the arrival of the ship *Lion*, some years ago, that until his name is announced, we do not recognize Robert Ashley. He is in his last year of College, and his mind has improved quite as

much as his body. No one would imagine that the dignified, clerical looking gentleman who is now engaged so earnestly in conversation with Mr. Barrett, is the same one who, a few short years ago, stood at the bar of a criminal court room, self-convicted of crime, while interested friends sought earnestly for a mitigation of the punishment his guilt deserved. And what a blessed thought it is that those very trials through which he passed, and the instrumentality of these very friends, were the means which the Almighty ordained as the process to prepare his youthful servant for the work he was now fitting himself, labor for souls.

We miss one face that we supposed we should certainly see here, for he loved the young man whose happy connection all were present to congratulate him upon, and his affection was reciprocated ; but Theodore Thomas, the faithful Sabbath school teacher, is now receiving his reward in heaven.

The evening was pleasantly spent in conversation and music ; and in the latter ac-

complishment, Miss Fanny Clement had an opportunity to display, to excellent advantage, her abilities as a pianist, which were very creditable to her, and which, in her father's distress, were made of such valuable pecuniary assistance to the family.

At a late hour the brilliant assembly dispersed.



CHAPTER XVIII.

NEW RELATIONS.

MR. CLEMENT continued to grow gradually worse, but his decline was so gradual that it created no alarm, and was to the immediate members of the family almost imperceptible; and he was himself so unconscious of danger as to oppose the calling of a physician, which the family had been anxious to do.

But at last, one Saturday night, about six months after the party, as Robert had called in, intending to pass the Sabbath with them, as he now frequently did, he found the sick man so much changed that it alarmed him, and he strongly urged that a doctor should be sent for, immediately; and although Mr. Clement

objected, the family and Robert insisted, and finally prevailed. The first question was, —

“ Why was I not sent for before ? ”

This question, more than any other which can be propounded to a family where there is a case of severe illness, carries terrible significance with it.

He pronounced Mr. Clement in a very critical condition. He should have been treated medically days, perhaps weeks, before, but everything that science could suggest should be done. But, alas ! his constitution, never strong, was unable to wrestle successfully with the terrible hold the insidious disease had taken, and he sank rapidly away, until the next Tuesday, when his spirit took its flight. He had gone to enjoy that rest he had so vainly sought below.

What a terrible blow to the family. There had never been a more affectionate circle. In his prosperity he had been an indulgent parent, a devoted husband. No want had ever been expressed, or desire he could anticipate, but had been gratified ; and when, by one fell swoop,

his riches took to themselves wings and flew away, the affection of wife and children found an opportunity, never before offered, to labor and economize in ways he little dreamed of, that the dear husband and father might not be deprived of any comfort or luxury which he had heretofore enjoyed.

In early life both Mr. and Mrs. Clement had given their hearts to God, and their family, particularly during childhood, had been educated in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. But as their days of prosperity came, and their associations in life became of a different character, their religious obligations were, one after another, neglected, and gayety and frivolity usurped the place of Christian duty ; and when the financial crisis came, they were found without the arm of the Lord to support them, it had been so long since His aid had been implored. But in their case, as in myriads of others, this was probably God's method of bringing his children to himself and their duty ; and taking the proper view of the calamity, they very soon became recon-

ciled to their lot, seeing God's hand in it, and bent their energies, with redoubled vigor, to their Master's work.

Mr. Clement was often heard to say that he had enjoyed more of Christ and religion since his property had been removed than ever before ; and during his long sickness he had time for reflection and prayer, that fitted him for the great change which awaited him. A more peaceful death-bed scene was never witnessed.

On Monday night the doctor had told the friends that Mr. Clement could not probably live through another day, and *he* was so informed. He was not surprised, however, and expressed a willingness to go, and his only regret seemed to be at leaving his dear family.

Robert had remained with the family during the day, as Mr. Clement was apparently so near his end, and on Tuesday evening was in another part of the house, when he was summoned to the bedside of the sick man, where he found all the members of the family assembled. Mr. Clement had been lying in a stupor, but had suddenly revived, and called for him.

As he entered, the sick man beckoned to him, and extending his thin, wasted hand, placed it in Robert's, saying, —

“Robert, I am about to leave this world of sin, and at dying I have no fears, and but one regret, that is, to leave my dear family. I had hoped to live to see you the preacher of good tidings to a world dead in sin ; but it has been otherwise ordered, and I feel that with one request gratified, I can say, contentedly, ‘Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.’ I have noticed the affection which has so long existed between Fanny and yourself with a great deal of interest and gratification, and hoped to live to see you united. I should then feel that my dear wife had another arm on which to lean, my children another brother, and Fanny a protector through life. This sight is denied me ; but it will soften my dying pillow, if I know that at an early day such will be the case. I know you are both agreed in the matter, and that it will only be a question of time ; but, in this solemn hour, as my footsteps are just taking hold on death, join your hands, and let me give you a father's blessing.”

The two did as requested, and amid the sobs of all present, the father, with a remarkably strong effort, offered a brief prayer of benediction, consecrating them to a heavenly Father's protection, asked God's kind care and shelter towards the rest of his mourning family, sank back on his pillow, and breathed no more.

The funeral services were held at the house, after which all that was mortal of the good man was conveyed to his former country home, and deposited in the old cemetery, by the side of a little one who had died some years before.

That country town had attractions in the estimation of that sorrowing family before; but now is made more sacred by this last sad visit.

Robert returned with the mourners to the city, whence he was obliged to hurry back to his studies, leaving them in the care of that God, who "giveth, and who taketh away," but whether in blessings or afflictions, "doeth all things well," blessed be His name.

The Commencement day of the institution had arrived, and how many associations clustered around the hearts of all on that day ! To the graduating class it was the day of honor ; the day from which they were to date the victories which they all expected to achieve in the future. The Junior was to step into the place just vacated, while the Sophomores and the Freshmen of last year were to advance, to make room for the bashful new comers,—the laughing stock to be, of those who, a year ago, were in the same position themselves. Probably few political campaigns or forensic efforts of the future will produce in sober manhood as much excitement as the honors of college to glowing youth.

Some are to commence the practice of law ; and there are vacancies in well established offices for them to step immediately into. Some will be obliged to labor earnestly for years, perhaps, before the bawble, reputation, which now seems so near their grasp will be theirs. Others will spend their lives in efforts for the sick in *body*, while a few will care for the souls of their fellow-men.

The exercises of such a day are always long, and frequently somewhat tedious ; and this was no exception. But when the valedictorian was announced, who, on this occasion, was our young friend Robert Ashley, every voice was hushed, and every eye directed to the speaker.

He ascended the platform with graceful dignity, made his bow without a particle of servility, yet with so much self-possession and nobility in his demeanor that it was almost unconsciously returned, with cordial politeness, by every wise and reverend head upon the platform ; and when his deep-toned and melodious voice fell upon the ear, not a word was lost on the eager throng.

His topic was "Fidelity." Fidelity to parents, to benefactors, to our country and its institutions ; chivalric fidelity to the ladies ; and at last, to the audience generally, fidelity to friends. How would the heart of his sainted mother have rejoiced to see this day ! What a beautiful spectacle for his father, who, now in heaven, had while on earth the blessed

privilege which was denied the mother, to see his son a Christian ; and what a glorious meeting that will be, when the sea shall give up its dead, and the grave shall be opened, around the great white throne to sing praises to the Lamb forever and ever, an unbroken family, — father, mother, son !

Who could help sympathizing with the widowed mother, who would soon hail the young speaker as son, as she listened with overflowing eyes to his tender expressions of fidelity to the memory of lost loved ones ; and Mr. Barrett, Mr. Wilder, George, and others of his warm friends, when friendship was so much needed, and but for which he would probably have never been in this position, — what wonder was it if they were forced to wipe away the tears which came thick and fast as he referred to fidelity to benefactors !

President and professors prophesied all that was good and great from such a young man ; and more than once, one fond heart beat audibly, as the eye of the eloquent speaker met hers.

The whole class, too, with whom he had been a favorite, but who had ridiculed the idea of weeping at a valedictory, could not resist his pathetic eloquence ; and when, in conclusion, he ended with a brief peroration on fidelity to God, there was silence for a few moments, and then followed deafening applause.

The settlement of their first year's business was very satisfactory to the new firm of Hutchins, Clement & Co., as well as to their friends, Mr. Barrett and Mr. Wilder.

George is now twenty-three years of age, and extensive preparations have been made for his marriage with Mary Barrett. Again the extensive rooms are brilliantly lighted, and filled with a large number of their numerous friends, Many were the congratulations bestowed on the young and happy couple ; and although many meaningless compliments are always paid on such occasions, those who knew them both best, heartily and confidently wished them happiness and prosperity ; and if happiness and prosperity are the natural results of lives

of strict integrity, governed by moral principle, and in the fear of God, theirs will be a felicitous lot.

George had frequently expressed a wish to reside out of town after his marriage, but had concluded not to think of it at present, as he felt that he could hardly afford to purchase just such a place as he would like. He had looked at a pretty cottage in one of the pleasantest towns in the vicinity of Boston, which was for sale, and had told Mary of it, but she had wisely agreed with him that they had better wait a little while, so the whole matter had been dismissed, they both being perfectly satisfied that the plan was not immediately feasible. But somehow it reached Mr. Barrett's ears that the desire for a country residence was mutual, and on the wedding night a deed of the property was presented to the surprised couple by Mr. Barrett, and they were in addition informed that their house would be furnished and ready for occupancy on their return from the bridal tour.

Many were the rich and valuable presents



they received on the occasion, but none were prized more highly than a beautiful copy of a Family Bible, the present of Mrs. Hutchins, which bore on its cover the inscription, "George and Mary; a Mother's Gift."

At the expected time the newly-wedded pair returned from their journey, and arrived late one evening at the beautiful house in the suburbs, which was all their own.

It had been handsomely furnished throughout by Mr. and Mrs. Barrett, with an eye to the comfort of the occupants, and, as they entered the house, they found everything arranged, and, in fact, housekeeping already commenced, for Mrs. Hutchins had been there before them, and would remain with them in the future. Neither George or Mary would have considered the circle complete without her. Together they made a tour of examination. Every room presented some new and valuable memento of thoughtfulness, and they were delighted with all they saw; and that night, as they all knelt down to celebrate the erection of a family altar, no happier household could be found anywhere.

Robert, during the year of theological study he had just completed, had frequent opportunities to preach for several destitute churches, some having no ministers, some whose pastors were sick, and others absent on vacations, or from other causes ; but now he had concluded his full course, he began to look about for a permanent abiding place.

His marriage, which had been delayed until he should have completed his collegiate course, now took place. The couple were admirably fitted for each other. Fanny was, a kind-hearted girl ; one who loved to do good, and was never happier than when she was engaged in some plan for the relief of suffering, or in rendering assistance to the sick and helpless. All said of her, " She will make an excellent minister's wife ;" and Mrs. Hutchins, who had found in the busy city a larger field for dispensing those charities for which she had been so long and so favorably known, always relied on Fanny for companionship and sympathy in all her works of benevolence.

Soon after his marriage, Robert accompa-

nied his wife and Mrs. Clement and Louise on a visit to their former country home, — a visit the Clements had been in the habit of making annually.

The old pastor of the church was at this time confined to his room by sickness, and on him Robert called, in company with Fanny, by whom he was introduced; and before taking their departure, the good old minister invited him to occupy his pulpit on the next Sabbath.

It was as much of a novelty to Mrs. Clement and her family to hear Robert, as to the good people of the town, for, although he had often participated in the devotional exercises of their conference meetings, they had never listened to a regular sermon from his lips. His sermons were deeply interesting, and so satisfactory were his efforts, that both pastor and people united in the request that he would remain there and occupy the pulpit during the illness of the minister; but, alas! the good old man was never again permitted to lift up his voice to those to whom he had so long ministered. He had labored long, and God

had graciously blessed him, but he was now called to his reward.

Robert continued to labor there, and in course of time he was called to the permanent charge of the church and society; a call which both a sense of duty and inclination prompted him to reply to favorably, for he had learned to love them, and he was ordained to the holy work of the ministry, and installed as pastor of the church.

The singular circumstances which led to his connection with them as pastor, or, more correctly speaking, the providence of God which ordered it, was somewhat of a disappointment to the Bethel Church, and particularly to the good old ship-chandler, in whose employ Robert had been, and who had imagined and hoped, as indeed had all the young man's friends, that as soon as his education had been finished, he would devote his talents exclusively to the welfare of the sailor, a work for which, at the time he first thought of studying for the ministry he appeared most peculiarly fitted, and which he himself had always im-

agined would be his appropriate work. But God seemed to have ordered it otherwise, and this way of duty being open to him, he felt that he had no right to neglect it. His ordination was attended by all his old friends, who had now good reason indeed to "praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men."

The ceremony of installation over, Robert began to make preparations for a residence, and, as good fortune would have it, the old Clement homestead was for sale, and about to be vacated, and he being able to secure it, the whole family were soon settled in their old home they loved so well, — the scene of so much happiness.

Robert's investments, made by advice of Mr. Barrett, had all proved profitable, and he still permitted all of his little fortune not required to settle for his new purchase, to remain where it had been placed under that gentleman's direction.



CHAPTER XIX.

REPENTANCE AND DEATH OF AN ENEMY.

IT was now six years since Charles Butler had voluntarily absented himself from home and friends in consequence of his crime.

Mr. Wilder had been in receipt of several letters from him enclosing remittances, and all breathing the same spirit of penitence, and desire to live down his terrible error. His communications, however, more frequently and more despondingly alluded to his impaired health. About six months since, Mr. Wilder received a letter from him, dated as before, from Montreal, in which he declared his intention to accept a position offered him to go to San Francisco, and take charge of a set of

books in a large mercantile house in that city. He was to start immediately. Another letter received later, dated from the latter city, informed Mr. Wilder of his safe arrival, and his health much improved by the sea voyage, and he indulged the hope that the climate of the Pacific coast would be more favorable to his condition. His business connection promised to be a pleasant and a profitable one ; and if his strength would only be equal to his ambition, he would soon be able, on his salary, to cancel all his obligations to Mr. Wilder. He seemed to be aware of the additional temptations to which he would be subjected in that wicked city, but as he adhered firmly to the good resolutions he had formed in Montreal, he knew all would be well. He enjoined the same secrecy as to his locality for the future, that had been granted him in the past, and Mr. Wilder's heart was gratified to learn that he was still true to his determinations, and flattered himself that he could detect something more of a Christian spirit in his correspondence than he ever before observed,

and symptoms of the change which both he and George earnestly prayed for daily. But his hopes for returning health proved futile ; his cough increased, and his physician told him he must leave California or die.

He had, up to this time, remitted Mr. Wilder three thousand dollars, leaving a balance of about two thousand dollars, including interest, and it was some time before Mr. Wilder heard a word from him, either directly or indirectly.

At last, one day, he received a letter from the father of the young man, dated from his residence in New Hampshire, announcing the arrival home of Charles in the last stages of consumption, and informing him that it was his son's request that he might see Mr. Wilder before it was too late.

True to his nature, the very next morning Mr. Wilder started, and at night arrived in the village at the old-fashioned tavern, the only accommodation the little town offered. Inquiries were made, and the services of a guide obtained. Mr. Wilder was somewhat prepared for the scene that awaited him ; he

had anticipated an interview of anguish, when he contrasted the present and former relations that existed between them; that young man once so promising, beloved and trusted, now disgraced, and only returning within reach of the arm of justice when to exercise physical force to aid that justice, would be inhuman. He had fancied something of the agony which would take possession of the young man when they should be brought face to face, the betrayed and the betrayer. But he was not prepared to see the alteration that disease had made in its victim.

He found him terribly emaciated, and with nearly every attempt to speak a coughing fit would interrupt, which left him so weak that he would be obliged to lie quiet for some time before he was able to articulate audibly. If Mr. Wilder had ever felt any inclination to bring the criminal to the punishment his offence would have received, it lost its existence now. He had, however, never borne any ill will towards him; he had loved him too much ever to have desired to harm him, and

had he voluntarily returned in health, even if he had never received a dollar of restitution, he would have lost a limb rather than to have hurt a hair of his head.

Mr. Wilder took the thin, wasted hand of the 'sick man, and bade him be quiet for a few moments, until the excitement consequent upon his arrival should have subsided in a degree; and even then, when he had become comparatively calm, he was not permitted to allude to the crime of which he had been guilty, and the memory of which weighed so heavily on his conscience. Mr. Wilder, as best he could, endeavored to cheer him, but there was nothing to warrant such a course. The inevitable proximity to death, with guilt not yet fully atoned for, the anguish into which the parents and rest of the family had been thrown by his sudden and unlooked-for return, and by the presence of the benefactor of their son, who had been grossly wronged by that son, all afforded but little ground for a hope that it would be possible to enliven the sufferer or his broken-hearted friends. The

only allusion to the subject of his former offence that Mr. Wilder would permit, he made himself, in the presence of the whole family.

“ Charles, after what little I have to say, I do not wish the old subject to be referred to again.

“ I have received your letters, all breathing as much of sorrow and penitence as any one could desire. You are forgiven, from my heart forgiven. I have written you so ; I now tell you so in the presence of these witnesses, your kind, loving, sorrowing friends. If I know my own heart, I tell you in all sincerity, that I entertain no feeling towards you but that of love and regard ; and my earnest prayer is that you may, if it please God, be spared many years to prove to the world, what I implicitly believe, that your repentance is heartfelt, and that you may be brought to the foot of the cross. Now, I want to see what can be done for your body, and then I shall want (by and by) a conversation with you, Charles, to know how it is with your soul.”

The kindness of heart and Christian forgiveness evinced by the good man melted the

hearts of all, and silence, broken only by sobs, continued for several moments.

At last, turning to the parents, Mr. Wilder inquired if any physician had been consulted since the sick man had returned ; and was informed that their own family doctor had visited him, and pronounced his case a hopeless one. He might live weeks, and he was liable to die soon ; but that nothing could be done except to make the patient as comfortable as possible.

Finding from a personal observation that no medical skill was able to effect a recovery, and noticing that the family were so confident of the ability of their own physician in the matter, Mr. Wilder made no effort to secure the attendance of any other ; in fact, it was apparent to every one that the sick man was near his end.

One by one the members of the family sought their respective couches for the night, and at last Charles, his parents, and Mr. Wilder were left alone.

It had been arranged for his mother to sit

up with him that night, but for more than one reason, Mr. Wilder desired to remain with him, and so expressed himself. The old lady strongly objected, but upon Mr. Wilder promising to call her if occasion should require, and as there was no particular necessity for wakefulness on the part of any one, for he was taking no medicine except drops for his cough once in a few hours, the parents yielded, and retired, leaving the two alone, giving Mr. Wilder an opportunity he had long desired, of private conversation.

Charles Butler had enjoyed, in early days, the advantages of Christian instruction, both at home and at the Sabbath school and church ; and although in subsequent life he had been tempted and yielded, and although he thought he was happy in the gay and dissipated company in which he spent the hours he was absent from the store, yet in his sober, calm moments conscience was at work, and his sufferings at the thought of home, his pious mother and her instructions were intense, and he would drink deeper of the cup

of pleasure to drown his sorrow ; and when he was led on, step by step, till he committed his first error in appropriating some of his employer's funds, even then he stopped and tried to retrace his steps, but found it too late. And one crime led to another, until detection and disgrace ended the scene. But after all had been done, and he found himself an exile from home, compelled to remain among strangers, and under a foreign flag to insure freedom, he began to think of the uniform kindness of the man to whom he had proved so treacherous, and to see that nothing but religion would have prompted him in the discovery of this system of embezzlement, to have exhibited such Christian love and forbearance. He began to think of that God he had so long forgotten and sinned against ; and this line of meditation continued until he appealed to Heaven for forgiveness, not only for the crime for which he was an alien, but for others, many and serious, of which none but himself and his God were cognizant ; and he trusted he had been forgiven. He had

never alluded to his trust in a Saviour in his letters, because he disliked to write anything which under the peculiar circumstances of the case would appear like hypocrisis ; but he had tried to live a Christian life ever since his first letter informed Mr. Wilder of his contrition.

That Mr. Wilder was rejoiced at the information he received that night, is not surprising ; and he arose from his chair and knelt at the bedside, and thanked God for the change—for the state of mind in which he found the young man ; and prayed that, if it could please God, the health of the sufferer might be restored ; but if not, that when the hour should come to exchange worlds, the grace which was now shed abroad in his heart, might be bestowed yet more abundantly ; that he might feel fully prepared, and not only prepared, but willing and anxious to “ depart and be with Christ, which is far better.”

The parents and friends of Charles had known of the moral change which had taken place in him during his stay in Canada, but they had not been informed that he cherished

a hope that he had been born again ; and the excitement attending his recent return, and the weakness of his hope, accompanied by his modesty on this subject, which in itself was a very strong indication of the genuineness of the change (for modesty had been no marked attribute of his heretofore), had presented no favorable opportunity for a full statement of the working of his heart until this night.

It was a delightful report Mr. Wilder had to make to them in the morning, and joy at the knowledge of it seemed for a moment to obscure the terrible fact that his end was fast approaching.

At their request, and the urgent solicitation of Charles himself, who begged him to remain with him till the last, Mr. Wilder consented to remain a few days in their midst ; and he returned to the hotel to make the necessary arrangements for his stay, and to notify, by mail, his family and George of the glorious news he had just heard, and which had made his sleepless night so delightful.

He was not called upon to wait long, for Charles continued to grow feebler and feebler daily, and it was a consolation to observe, as his strength failed, and his hold on earth grew less and less tenacious, that his faith in God increased, and he took a firmer and firmer hold on heaven.

He wasted away, unable to converse much (although he retained his consciousness to the very last), and just a week from the day Mr. Wilder came to see him, his summons came, and the ransomed spirit of Charles Butler was wafted to the presence of its Maker, leaving no doubt on the minds of all who were with him in his last moments that God had taken the penitent sufferer home.

How solacing to those left to mourn was the reflection which now supported them in this bitter hour, that his crimes had all been washed away by a Saviour's blood, and that of him it might be said that he had joined that glad throng who had come "out of great tribulation, and had washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb!"



CHAPTER XX.

CONCLUSION.



HENRY CLEMENT (whom we have quite neglected in our interest in his old friends, George Hutchins and Robert Ashley), after his sister's marriage, and the removal of the family to the country, having lost his home, was obliged to seek out for himself a new residence. This he found no easy matter, for he had always been somewhat fastidious in his tastes ; and now he was in a lucrative business, he had the means at his disposal to gratify his desires.

One day, while in quest of a boarding-place, he happened to be passing through F—— Street, and noticed the familiar house of Mrs. Rice. It had been a long time since he had

seen or heard anything of her, or any of her family, and he concluded to make a call.

Mrs. Rice had kept a boarding-house ever since the death of her husband, many years before, and had by economy been able, using her favorite expression, to "lay up something for a rainy day," and, having worked hard during all her best days, Henry was not surprised when she told him that she had saved money enough to give up keeping boarders, and was about to move into a smaller house, where she could have more rest. Her son Joseph, whom we once knew slightly, and who, together with his mother, was led to seek the Saviour through the instrumentality of Robert, was now the captain of a fine brig. He was a Christian man, an honor to his religious profession, and his ship a floating Bethel. A good man, a captain, who belonged to the same Bethel church, had taken an interest in him, and under his protection and tuition Joseph had been able to fit himself to be an officer, had been three or four voyages as mate, and was now on his second trip as master in the West India trade.

Mrs. Rice was hurrying to furnish her new house for immediate occupancy for the reception of Joseph, who would, on his return from sea, bring to it a wife.

Henry made inquiries about the young men who were boarders when he was there, and received the delightful intelligence that nearly all of them had given good evidence of a change of heart ; and it was all attributed to George's influence, the alteration they had observed in Robert, and the Christian example that had been set by both these young men.

Henry found it no easy task to obtain a boarding-place to his mind ; and one evening, while making a call on the Wilders, for he was a constant visitor there, he mentioned that he was very lonely now all his friends had moved away from the city, and that he disliked extremely the hotel life he was now enduring, the bustle and excitement being far from congenial to his disposition. Mrs. Wilder observed this, and remarked to her husband, "Would it not be pleasant for us all to have

Henry with us ?” Her husband immediately conceded that it would ; while Henry, if he had entertained any doubts of the project being an agreeable one, had them dispelled in the glance of approval bestowed on him by Ella, who looked up from her crotchet work just long enough, and with just expression enough to prompt him to say at once, —

“I should like that of all things else. I cannot endure being among strangers so much ; and at a public house the society is not agreeable to me.”

The change was at once made ; but it led to another soon, for the young people before many months, concluded, with their parents’ consent and approval, to set up housekeeping on their own account, so in losing a boarder, a son-in-law was gained.

The firm of Hutchins, Clement & Co. is still in existence, engaged in a large and very profitable business, to which they devote their time and apply their talents, not to make money to hoard it, but that with it they may do good. Strictly honest in all their transac-

tions, they have won the respect and esteem of all with whom they are in any way connected, while no one, be he friend or foe to religion, fails to observe that there is something more than policy aiding them in their worldly affairs, and it is a common expression to hear made of them, that "their word is as good as their bond."

They are both earnest laborers in the church of God ; and George has been, for some years, the superintendent of the Sabbath school connected with the church of which he and his family are members, in the flourishing village near Boston, where we saw them so pleasantly settled a few years since.

Young Mrs. Hutchins accompanies her husband in his frequent errands of mercy, and is as much interested in private charities, and the more public benevolences of the day, as was George's mother in her palmy days, and acts in her stead now in dispensing with a liberal hand those gifts which Mother Hutchins's advanced age compels her to delegate another to do ; while the old lady, full of years,

but still in good general health, rarely leaves home, but seems to be living her early maternal days over again, as she aids in the education of her little grandson, Georgie Barrett Hutchins, whom she declares "the image of his father." Long may the evening of her well-spent life be prolonged, that she may continue to enjoy the happiness she so well deserves.

Rev. Robert Ashley is an efficient and successful minister of God; and although there were many at first in his society who considered him too young and inexperienced to assume charge of a church so long blessed with the counsels of a more mature mind, he enjoys now, to a remarkable degree, the confidence and devotion of his people.

His labors have been blessed by frequent revivals of God's grace, those unmistakable indications of divine favor, and his whole heart is in his work. He is as deeply interested in the conversion of the sailor as ever, and his voice is often heard in presenting their claims, both in his own pulpit and at his

old religious home at the Bethel, where he is always welcome, and where there are many who date their conviction, and subsequent conversion, to something he has said or done.

The old Clement house (now the parsonage), is looking finely, having been improved and put in complete repair, and the minister and his wife have with them still, Mrs. Clement and Louise, all enjoying good health, and what is better than everything else, all walking close with God.

The parsonage is the frequent resort of the young people of the society, with whom their pastor is deservedly popular, and who is deeply interested in everything appertaining to their moral and mental improvement, at the same time never forgetting the all-important subject of the welfare of their souls.

Mr. and Mrs. Barrett and Mr. and Mrs. Wilder are still living in the enjoyment of all the blessings and happiness so sure to follow lives so well spent. Time has dealt gently with them, and they are as active and energetic in the fulfilment of duty, as ardent sym-

pathizers with, and as liberal patrons of, every effort to relieve poverty and distress as ever ; and many a poor widow and orphan have reason to thank God for their acquaintance ; while in the record above are placed to their credit many a good deed, which no tongue on earth lives to proclaim, or pencil has ever traced.

Vice has its allurements and remorseful results to-day, as well as during the lifetime of Charles Butler ; and virtue its reward in the inward peace it always brings, even if it be not signally compensated, as it was in the cases of George Hutchins and Henry Clement ; while the reformation of Robert Ashley, who was once so unpromising, but now so worthy a Christian, is an exhibition of what religion will do for all who will accept the free terms on which it is granted.

That each and every one of my readers may take example by whatever of good has been seen in any of the characters to whom we now say farewell, and endeavor to emulate their virtues, is the heartfelt desire of the Author.

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